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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Nathaniel Z. Heggins Bryant entitled "Experiencing the Modern American City and Addressing the Slum in the United States and Brazil: 1890-1933." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Mary Papke, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Charles Maland, Lisi Schoenbach

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Experiencing the Modern American City and Addressing the Slum
in the United States and Brazil: 1890-1933

A Thesis Presented for
the Master of Arts Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Nathaniel Zachery Heggins Bryant
May 2008

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Abstract

This thesis examines the treatment of slum spaces in the US and Brazil spanning the period 1890-1933, seeking to understand better the ethics of representation regarding the slum as well as the varying aesthetic agendas and political engagements of four novelists. The works under consideration are *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) by William Dean Howells, *The Slum* (1890) by Aluísio Azevedo, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) by John Dos Passos, and *Industrial Park* (1933), by Patrícia Galvão. I chart the varying methods of representation associated with each novel, from Howell's critical realism to Azevedo's unique version of naturalism to the fragmented experiences of modernism found in the final two novels, in part to understand how each novelist engages with the slum as well as employs it as a literal and metaphoric space in his or her work. Finally, this work also engages with and contributes to the relatively new fields of metropoetics and inter-American studies, and allows me the opportunity to take a comparativist approach to the literatures of this period, a concern that motivates me as a scholar and academic.

Chapter I

Introduction

“Why the hell do people live in cities?”

“Why do I go on dragging out a miserable existence in this crazy epileptic town . . . that’s what I want to know.”

—John Dos Passos¹

The bittersweet end of John Singleton’s riveting and controversial 1991 film *Boyz n The Hood* finds Doughboy (played by rapper Ice Cube) and Tre Styles (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) talking on Tre’s porch. Reeling from his brother Ricky’s savage murder, his late-night revenge upon the murderers, and the early morning forty ounces of malt liquor he is drinking, Doughboy poignantly observes the difficulties associated with living in the crime-ridden neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles during the early 90s: “Turned on the TV this morning. Had this shit on about—about livin’ in a, in a violent world. Showed all these foreign places . . . where foreigners live, and all. Started thinkin’, man. Either they don’t know, don’t show, or don’t care about what’s goin’ on in the ‘hood.” Doughboy then crosses the street at the same moment two separate intertitles appear on the screen; the first reads, “The next day Doughboy saw his brother buried.” The appearance of the final intertitle— “Two weeks later he was murdered”—coincides with Doughboy literally growing more transparent until he disappears from the film altogether after reaching the other side of the street. Doughboy’s violent life and death gives vivid, concrete visibility to a moment at the beginning of the film, when we read in an introductory intertitle that “One out of twenty-one Black American males will murdered

¹ Quoted from Page 193, *Manhattan Transfer*. Boston: Mariner Books Books, 2000.

in their lifetime.” Sadly, the film seems to suggest that there is no way for individuals like Doughboy to escape the crushing anonymity associated with inner-city violence; by revenging his brother’s death, he in turn becomes another young African-American man killed in the ghetto.

Doughboy’s poetic statement regarding the invisibility of living peripherally in the postmodern megacity echoes more than a decade later and half a world away in a television show that a writer for *the Los Angeles Times* calls a Brazilian version of “‘The Wonder Years.’ With some guns” (Lloyd). Following Fernando Meirelles’s wildly successful *Cidade de Deus* (*City of Men*) in 2002, producers, writers, and directors began collaborating on a mini-series—one that would last four seasons—entitled *Cidade dos homens* (*City of Men*), which aired from 2003 to 2006. The show revolves around the lives of two thirteen-year-old boys—named Laranjinha and Acerola—in an unnamed *favela*, or slum, in Rio de Janeiro. In the episode entitled “Correio,” or “The Mail,” a local *patrão* (a boss; in this case, a drug-dealing community leader) chooses the boys to deliver mail to the residents of their *favela* because the informal residences there have no legitimate street addresses, making it nearly impossible for the real mailman to deliver his mail. An undeliverable letter complicates their job, and to return it they make their way down the *morro* (hill) into Rio proper where they quickly become lost. They find their way thanks to a map given to them by a magazine vender, and upon ridding themselves of the letter, they consult the map to find their way home. Much to their surprise and consternation, a huge green patch—denoting a forest—represents the *morro* on which their favela is located, instead of the familiar grid pattern symbolizing Rio proper. At

least according to one map, the favelas are so informal that they do not even exist, despite the fact that Rio de Janeiro's six hundred favelas now house close to a third of the city's population and "have been growing at a faster rate than the middle- and upper-class areas" of the city (Peixoto 170).²

Doughboy's virtual invisibility in *Boyz N the Hood* is compellingly linked to the blank spaces on the map of Rio. It is as though Doughboy's anonymity has been reinscribed geographically, uprooted from the inner city of Los Angeles, transplanted to Rio de Janeiro, and peripheralized to the point that city planners refuse to recognize the area on a map, despite our ability now to view favelas—and to see plainly the unequal distribution of wealth that supports favelaization—from satellites in space. Saddled with the attendant miseries of overurbanization and deindustrialization that has plagued the Southern Cone for the past forty years, Laranjinha and Acerola, like Doughboy before them, exist only as a statistic for Rio politicians and policeman. Sadly, the statistics are similar. According to an introductory intertitle in the 2005 documentary *Favela Rising*, "Between the years of 1987 and 2001, 467 minors were murdered in Israel and Palestine combined. During that same time, 3,937 minors were murdered in one city in Brazil."

The conditions of the inner city are worsening around the world as we near a critical moment in human history and our collective cultural evolution. In his 2006 book *Planet of Slums*, cultural critic Mike Davis writes,

Sometime in the next year or two, a woman will give birth in the Lagos

² "Maps are never value-free images," according to J.B. Harley (278). Historically, the notion of silence and maps, especially regarding omission, is "central to any argument about the influence" of maps' "hidden political messages," often reinforcing "self-fulfilling prophecies about the geography of power" (290). Finally, Harley maintains, "Cartography remains a teleological discourse, reifying power, reinforcing the *status quo*, and freezing social interaction within charted lines" (303).

slum of Ajegunle, a young man will flee his village in west Java for the bright lights of Jakarta, or a farmer will move his impoverished family into one of Lima's innumerable *pueblos jóvenes*. The exact event is unimportant and it will pass entirely unnoticed. Nonetheless it will constitute a watershed in human history, comparable to the Neolithic or Industrial revolutions. For the first time the urban population of the earth will outnumber the rural. Indeed, given the imprecisions of Third World censuses, this epochal transition has probably already occurred. (1)

As such, the critical apparatuses we have used to view the world in the past must change in order to meet the new demands that urban landscapes present around the planet. The classic opposition of the city/country now takes on entirely new meanings—the anxieties of representation that Raymond Williams examines in *The Country and the City* when England's population became predominantly urban must now be redeveloped and reapplied to today's global, urban situations. The production and use of resources like water, sewage, and electricity—the installation and maintenance of infrastructure that much of the postmodern West considers 'basic,' thereby revealing what Patricia Yaeger calls our "infrastructural privilege"—are issues at the core of violence in inner city slums everywhere (17). Consider for a moment what Davis considers the "primordial urban contradiction"—"excremental surplus," or, more simply, "living in shit"—in the section of Nairobi, Kenya, known as Kibera (137). In 1998, "the Laini Saba slum in Kibera . . . had exactly ten working pit latrines for 40,000 people, while in Mathare 4A there were two public toilets for 28,000 people" (139). The politics of clean water use has given

way to the politics of defecation in the same parts of the world that Western philanthropists wish to ‘modernize’ by providing cheap internet connections, and one must wonder where the electricity would come from in order to maintain the connections that would bring those users closer to the rest of the world. Constant peripheralization has forced many peoples away from city centers, and they have severely limited access to fundamental educational and health care facilities; commercial centers; affordable personal or municipal transportation; and stable, legitimate employment opportunities, not to mention formal housing. Marianne Fay notes that in Brazil and Mexico, for example, “formal housing is unaffordable to households in the bottom 70 percent of the income distribution” (6). This is the life of millions of lower-class urban dwellers now, and these miserable conditions surely represent the future of many more millions to come.

Where can we find the origins of this global urban phenomenon? And when did they start? And, just as importantly, how have these problems been treated aesthetically, in literature and film? This study seeks to contribute some answers to these broad research questions by examining the treatment of the modern city and the slum in four novels—two Brazilian and two from the United States—spanning a time period from the 1890s to the early 1930s. This is a vitally important period not only from a literary standpoint, but also from a historical one as well. During this period, both Brazil and the US saw the rapid expansion and development that would lead to the problems I described above. One need only watch the news to see images of ancient steam pipes (supposedly laid down in 1924) exploding beneath New York City or continual violence in some of

the oldest favelas³—which date back to the 1880’s—to be reminded of the period’s continued relevance to our own. The novels I will examine are *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) by William Dean Howells, *The Slum* (1890) by Aluísio Azevedo, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) by John Dos Passos, and *Industrial Park* (1933), by Patrícia Galvão.

By examining a realist and a modernist urban text from each country, I hope to add to the burgeoning field of metropoetics, which Patricia Yaeger calls "a poetics of infrastructure," that attempts to map the social, economic, and cultural geographies of cities through the lens of literary aesthetics and form.⁴ Theorists of metropoetics call for global, interdisciplinary reassessments and recontextualizations of urban(e) literature (21). Following Yaeger’s suggestions, my study is written partly in the hope of “rethink[ing] the urban imaginary in the light of contemporary urban crises” and highlighting the similarities and differences—regarding aesthetics and otherwise—of two American nations’ literatures (13). While this seems a daunting project, I find it compelling not only as an intellectually rigorous reappraisal of past literatures but also as based in a field heavily invested in the immediate living conditions of city-dwellers around the world as well as a discipline firmly committed to social justice. Finally, this project allows me to take a strongly comparativist, inter-American approach to literature, a fairly new but nevertheless important disciplinary venture that I hope to contribute to in the near future.

³ For example, Morro de Providencia, Rio’s first favela, was founded in the 1880s (Davis 27).

⁴ See Patricia Yaeger’s introductory essay to a recent special topics edition of *PMLA* (January 2007) devoted to “Cities” for a more in-depth articulation of metropoetics.

My initial interest in this project started during the third year of my undergraduate career. During that year I read *Ulysses*—the centerpiece of a Modern British novel course—and two novels by Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* and *Manhattan Transfer*, both of which I had read on my own. What prompted me to read Dos Passos was my fascination with World War I literature and modernism, and Dos Passos's name continually came up in conjunction with Hemingway and e.e. cummings, of whom I was much more familiar. I found *Three Soldiers* to be an engaging narrative, especially in Dos Passos's descriptions of the US Army as a machine and the expatriate experiences of his fictional alter-ego Andrews in Paris. Because I expected much of the same from *Manhattan Transfer*, I immediately found it both exasperating and intriguing in its elliptical description of the city and its plot-less, fragmentary narrative development. However, I found the kinetic descriptions of the city compelling, especially regarding the elevated and the subway, and I distinctly recall my desire to develop an argument considering together modernism, kineticism, and modernity in my MA statement of purpose, drawing on jazz, the mobile sculptures of Alexander Calder, and literature like *Manhattan Transfer* or e.e. cummings's poetry. Fortunately, I finally get to address at least one facet of this topic in this thesis—especially in the Howells and Dos Passos chapters—but I think I do it with a bit more panache and sophistication than what I originally possessed as an undergraduate.

Not long after reading *Manhattan Transfer*, I was looking for similar novels online and happened upon a anonymous post recommending Patrícia Galvão's *Industrial Park*, Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*. I found a

copy of Galvão's novel and read it in a few hours, finding that experience even less rewarding than tackling *Manhattan Transfer*, in part because of the utter foreignness of the culture and because I was still unused to reading non-linear, fragmented narratives. But I kept all of these novels in the back of my mind and on my shelves, hoping one day to interrogate more thoroughly these texts as a potential project in international urban narratives. This idea turned out to be the first topic of my potential thesis but one I quickly abandoned because of the sheer scope of the project. Instead, I settled on this particular project, one which engages with a number of important questions I have regarding modern literature and a limited number of parallel texts.

As mentioned earlier, I have cultivated a strong interest in inter-American literature in part because I feel it necessary to interrogate the usual spaces of modernity and to expand the scope of what is considered modernist literature. Recently, many modernist scholars have undertaken various projects aimed at decentering the capitals of modernity and modernisms; as Anthony Geist and José Monleón state, one of the historically “central assumptions that fuel the concept of modernism” is the “proposition that the life of modernity is fully experienced only in the centers of economic power,” a proposition they then carefully examine and subsequently explode (xviii). Indeed, as they point out, the practitioners of modernist literature—“from Baudelaire to Benjamin, from Hausmann to Joyce or Picasso or García Lorca”—sought to remap “the physical and metaphysical realities of modernism” constantly, and some of the most important and influential modern artists—“Joyce, Tristan Tzara, Apollinaire, Kafka, Picasso, Dalí, Buñuel”—were “imported from the periphery” (xx, xxx). If the French “have long held

that ‘Africa begins at the Pyrenees,’” as Geist and Monleón contend, the marginalization of Spanish and Latin America literature has been a common intellectual event in need of immediate revision, and much of their work attempts to situate “modernism in the flow, in the fluid exchange between center and margin that ultimately deconstructs that opposition, questioning not so much the relations of power as the terms in which culture engages that power” (xxx). A more recent collection of articles that address these issues on a more global scale is *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, and Modernity*, co-edited by Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel. Like Geist and Monleón, Doyle and Winkiel look to Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset’s influential essay “The Dehumanization of Art” (1924) as an articulation of the radical spatial reordering undertaken by the modern avant-gardes, wherein art and artists have “moved toward the outer rings” of human activity and interest (Ortega y Gasset 52). Many of the contributors to *Geomodernism* rightly contend that the hegemony of white Anglo-European modernisms is predicated on “contact-zone clashes and reversals” and that it is “haunted by ghosts—the repressed ghosts of an African modernity, an Atlantic modernity, a subaltern modernity” (Doyle and Winkiel 3). Approaching modernism not as a cohesive whole but as a series of “interconnected modernisms” therefore forces modernism to break open into “geomodernisms, which signals a locational approach to modernisms’ engagement with cultural and political discourses of global modernity” (3). The ramifications of this are twofold: “It unveils both unsuspected ‘modernist’ experiments in ‘marginal’ texts and unsuspected correlations between those texts and others that appear either more conventional or more postmodern” (3). I hope that by comparing two novels produced in

and about *the* modernist metropolis—New York—and two produced in and about one of the most consistently disregarded nations in the Americas—Brazil, whose language, history, and scale are so singular in the Americas as to marginalize its literary and artistic productions beyond even that of an already marginalized Spanish-speaking Latin America—that I at least make motions toward the need to broaden our discussions of so-called American literature as well as gesture toward the overarching current trends in much of modernist studies.

I situate this study squarely within each nation's metropolis precisely because this allows me the opportunity to examine the similarities of the urban experience during the realist, naturalist, and modernist/vanguardist period of the US and Brazil. This parallelism among texts still allows me to examine both place and placedness—the embodiment of place that is integral to modernism as a global phenomenon—but it also gives my study the strict parameters of only major urban spaces for consideration. Even within those parameters, there is much to explore. Questions of conveyance and class; labor, exploitation, violence, and deportation; immigration and emigration; and gender issues all constitute fundamental concerns of each novel. For instance, in the second chapter, I examine the elevated train's role as a novel means of conveyance and as a potentially powerful means with which to exercise and express voyeuristic and economic power in Howells's realist novel *A Hazard of New Fortunes*. The third chapter takes up the question of informal, substandard housing and the illegitimate construction of the slum in Aluísio Azevedo's naturalist *The Slum*, set in Rio de Janeiro in the early 1880s; Azevedo's novel critiques the crude capitalist machine effecting slum dwellings that

eventually allows for an early form of gentrification to take place at the same time that other slums devolve into menacing places of misery and degradation. My fourth chapter examines the subjective narrative aesthetics and somewhat confusing politics of John Dos Passos's thoroughly modernist *Manhattan Transfer*, a novel that closely examines the rise of the metropolis proper and how it affects its residents. I conclude my study with a discussion that extends the aesthetic and political considerations of the Dos Passos chapter but relocates them in the gendered labor conditions of textile mills in São Paulo, as depicted by the Marxist-feminist-vanguardist Patrícia Galvão in her novel *Industrial Park*. Relying on the technique of juxtaposition so central to these novels, my study takes its place in a reinvigorated American literary study that makes new our apprehension of these seminal works.

Chapter II

“To Catch the Gotham Spirit”: The Elevated Train in William Dean Howells’s *A Hazard of New Fortunes*

Inequality has [its] effect on the architecture.

—William Dean Howells⁵

There was no escaping the fact that the city of the future was not going to look like the city of the past, that life in the city was not going to be conventional. Every year the population grew larger and more diverse as it absorbed arrivals from all over the world. Every day the newspapers announced a new shape in the landscape or a new scientific advancement. Inevitably one thing led to another—the elevator to taller buildings, the Bessemer process of making steel to steel-framed building or the skeleton skyscraper. There was a complicity among new things that seemed to propel the city forward on its own.

—Elizabeth Hawes⁶

Lily Bart—alone, afraid, and increasingly addicted to chloral—walks down a darkened street in New York after having her prescription filled at a pharmacy. She runs into Simon Rosedale, who cannot help registering his surprise and consternation at her ill-kept and unhealthy appearance. As if to reinforce literally and metaphorically how far Lily has fallen from her former life among the upper echelons of New York, Edith Wharton describes Rosedale glancing “at the dirty and unpropitious corner on which they stood, with the shriek of the ‘elevated’ and the tumult of trams and waggons [sic] contending hideously in their ears” (289). Three chapters later, after she has written the balance of her inheritance away in the form of a check to pay back an enormous debt to Gus Trenor, Lily sits in the stillness of her house, the only noise coming from “the rumble of the ‘elevated’ . . . at long intervals through the deep unnatural hush” (321). The elevated train, one of the most salient features in New York City at this time, makes

⁵ Quoted from Hawes 118.

⁶ Quoted from Hawes 113, from the chapter entitled “William Deans Howells in New York” in *New York, New York: How the Apartment House Transformed the Life of the City (1869-1930)*.

only two appearances in Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, by all critical accounts a New York novel. Moreover, both of these appearances are clear environmental indications of Lily's fall from social and economic grace.

In order to capture life in the city accurately, US realist and naturalist writers like William Dean Howells and Wharton often turned their attention to the architecture and landscape of the city itself. In their fiction, these writers document the gritty, kinetic, and evolving human relationships taking place in an urban setting, especially New York City, a place so different from anything else he knew that Howells confessed to not having language adequate enough to capture and encapsulate it precisely. As one of the most significant features of the New York urban narrative, the elevated train (el) appears in a number of realist, naturalist, and modernist texts, and its appearance always affects the tenor, as well as the vehicle, of the message as well as the aesthetics of the fiction in which it is embedded. In this chapter I wish to explore this dynamic relationship.

Indeed, I would argue, the elevated train is a critically overlooked but unique and important metonymic device for a dynamically evolving and modern urban landscape in the United States, a landscape that provides many of the most important US writers with the subject matter that ultimately makes their work lasting and important. This chapter examines the elevated train's complex presence within one of the first American city novels. William Dean Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* represents a profound shift in American literature through its representation of New York City at a pivotal time in its progress towards the modernist period, and in many ways the el serves as a sign for this transition. Furthermore, the changing way in which fictional characters view New York

City is rooted in the means by which they travel around the city. The el trip is a locus of experience that has a profound effect on its documentation, and New York novels at the turn of the century are marked by many kinetic, cinematic descriptions, passages enabled *only* by the presence of the elevated train. Finally, this chapter culminates in an examination of the paradoxical relationship that immigrants have with the elevated as viewed by Howells. Simply put, the els have understated but important functions as a form of social control in one of the modern world's most rapidly developing urban centers.

During the 19th century, an ever-increasing population and the growing distances between offices, factories, and shopping areas at the southern end of Manhattan Island and the residential neighborhoods that continued to expand northward precipitated the need for mass transit in New York City. The tension between lower Manhattan and the areas growing around it reflects an uncontrolled growth pattern in the city. According to Thomas Bender, old Manhattan exemplified an “earlier European sense of enclosed space and of streets as milieus rather than arteries,” while the outermost fringe areas to the north, especially around Central Park, were considered “ill-defined and literally undistinguished urban space” (51, 52). Ferries provided some relief during the early part of the century because they allowed workers living in Brooklyn and New Jersey a fairly safe and fast way to get to and from Manhattan, but ferries did little to alleviate the terrible pedestrian and horse carriage traffic on the island itself. According to Michael W. Brooks, these horrendous traffic conditions were a result of Manhattan's length and narrowness, a feature exacerbated by the 1811 commissioners' plan that divided

Manhattan into the city's familiar grid-iron pattern. This plan "provided main streets running east-west from the East River to the Hudson but few north-south avenues along the length of Manhattan Island," a plan which failed miserably to meet the needs of a growing population (8). In 1865, the *New York Times* complained that New York had become a city in which "the entire population is turned daily into Broadway and four avenues—Third, Fourth, Sixth, and Eighth—and [is] thrown like shuttles from one end to the other" ("Relief of Broadway"). Historians estimate that in the following decades, nearly half of the city's population lived in an area between Canal Street to the south and East 14th Street towards the north, an area that Brian Cudahy calls "a mile-and-a-half band of human misery that saw residential densities of 300,000 people per square mile as immigrants streamed to America's shores in larger and larger waves" (62). Even Henry James, writing in *The American Scene* (1907), notes that the problems of Manhattan's "primal topographic curse" were only aggravated by the "original sin of the longitudinal avenues perpetually, yet meanly intersected" across the island (77).

The elevated train was one of a number of potential technologies designed to remedy the persistent problem of traffic and safety during this period. Other ideas included inventor Alfred Ely Beach's "pneumatic tubes," based on extant models in England,⁷ as well as that of the Metropolitan Railway⁸ and the Arcade Railway⁹ (Brooks

⁷ After fighting Tammany Hall opposition for a number of years, Beach finally saw work started on his pneumatic tube in 1873, "but the depression that began in September of that year made it impossible to raise capital" sufficient to continue the project, and it was abandoned soon afterwards (Brooks 27).

⁸ A subway design inspired by London's Metropolitan, the Metropolitan Railway in New York was planned to "start at the Battery, proceed under Broadway to 23rd Street, then go north under Fifth Avenue until it divided into separate branches around Central Park" (Brooks 18).

⁹ Proposed by Melville C. Smith in 1866, the Arcade Railway was a plan that called for two Broadways, a more pedestrian friendly old Broadway and a new underground Broadway that could house shopping areas

17). Although the first plans for an elevated train were drawn up as early as 1840, New Yorkers would have to wait until a number of other designs failed before serious considerations were made regarding the el. By the 1860s, as open space on the island grew smaller and the buildings themselves became taller, the idea of an elevated platform for mass transit had effectively captured the imagination of the city. After plans for the city's first subway fell through during the course of the 1870s, many industrialists turned to the el as the most practical response to metropolitan traffic problems, and by 1880, the els were complete.

Despite their convenience—most Manhattanites were within “a ten-minute walk from rapid transit” by 1879—the els created numerous problems for the city and its inhabitants (Brooks 31). The areas beneath the els were always dark, dirty, and noisy, and fires were habitual hazards on the tracks and below them as well. Soot from the trains covered everything near the tracks, and pedestrians walking near the els were in constant danger of falling timbers, pieces of coal and iron, hot and cold water, and smoldering embers. Most insidious of all was a discovery made by doctors at the time. As reported in an 1893 issue of *Scientific American*, the elevated trains were contributing to a new type of eye trouble for New Yorkers. As the trains braked for stops, miniscule metal slivers were ground off from the trains' brakes. These shards were highly unsafe for anyone: “Viewed under the microscope, their dangerous character becomes apparent. The greater part were bordered by a jagged fringe with very fine points, compared with which the point of a cambric needle appeared dull” (qtd. in Brooks 35). Although many

with wide storefronts. Smith proposed that four tracks be laid in the middle of the underground arcade “for express and local trains drawn by steam locomotives” (Brooks 27).

New Yorkers rode the els daily,¹⁰ these problems contributed to a growing city-wide ambivalence about the presence of the trains, feelings which lasted until the city dismantled the last el during the 1950s.

City planners and residents also consistently viewed the elevated train as only a temporary solution to metropolitan traffic problems. This perspective was fueled in part by the numerous problems associated with the els, but the efficacy and value of the subway in London (first opened in 1863) and in Boston (unveiled on September 1, 1897) soon convinced more hesitant New York city planners that the subway was *the* transit system best suited to serve the city (Cudahy 78-84). Because of this, some urban theorists like Michael Brooks consider the elevated train as a “transitional” mode of transportation, a description that in many ways is paradigmatic of the city itself (46). While the el was originally viewed as a shining example of “the metropolis’s coupling of technology and architecture,” it would soon outlive its usefulness, and the el eventually became a symbol of “an older New York,” a city marked by a population explosion within the confines of an outdated and decaying infrastructure that would eventually give way to the “wonder City of the subway and the skyscraper” (Moffi 37; Brooks 46). This is precisely the transitional period that gave rise to realist authors like Howells and Wharton, and their novels should be read in this context.

Howells’s *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889) best captures this transitional period and is often cited as the first work attempting to write about or describe in detail modern

¹⁰ Brian Cudahy states that by 1893 the els serviced “a half-million riders *every day*,” while Michael Brooks (citing statistics from John P. McKay’s study *Tramways and Trolleys: The Rise of Urban Mass Transit in Europe*) contends that the number of per capita rides on public transit in 1890 was “233 in New York” in comparison to “74 in London and 91 in Berlin” (67; 35).

New York City in a novel. In one introduction to the novel, Philip Lopate considers Howells's work as ranking among the "fifty greatest American novels of all time" because of its groundbreaking attempts to "capture New York City, or for that matter, any major American city" in prose, thus paving the way for "*Maggie, Sister Carrie, Babbitt, Manhattan Transfer, Miss Lonelyhearts, Invisible Man*" and a host of other important late 19th century and 20th century novels (v). While Howells's treatment of the city seems somewhat lacking in certain respects (especially regarding his treatment of the lower classes and immigrants), his conscious efforts to make the city as much of a character as Basil March is what truly gives *A Hazard of New Fortunes* its historical and literary significance. Integral to this treatment of the city is Howells's use of urban travel—on foot as well as on the elevated train—as a means of introducing the city and its architecture. As Mario Maffi states, "The discovery of the city . . . takes place through the movement of characters *across* it" (36).

The novel follows the fortunes of Basil March and his wife Isabel—both originally from Boston—as they attempt to navigate and settle down in New York City. Their reason for doing so is that Basil accepts an offer from his friend Fulkerson to edit a journal entitled *Every Other Week*, a publication that mainly carries short stories, literary sketches, and artwork about New York, intended for sophisticated female readers living outside the city. After a rather arduous search for suitable living space, Basil meets a kaleidoscopic cast of characters representing every walk of life in the metropolis, including the maimed German socialist and labor activist Lindau; the new millionaire Dryfoos and his family, whose fortune comes from a natural gas discovery on his

property in the Midwest and props up *Every Other Week*; an aristocratic fop with artistic tendencies and multiple amorous affairs; members from two different generations of aristocratic Southerners recently moved to New York; and the unnamed but highly visible underclass of laborers and immigrants that populate the city. In a rather sentimental twist that constitutes the novel's climax, Dryfoos's recently estranged son dies in a violent labor clash between strikers and the police, and to overcome his grief Dryfoos decides to take his family to Europe; with an almost Jamesian touch, Dryfoos's wealth and eligible daughter attract the impoverished, predatory aristocrats of the Continent seeking capital, and she becomes engaged to a Frenchman. Before he leaves, Dryfoos relinquishes direct control of *Every Other Week* to its editors who successfully run it without his constant intrusions, and the novel ends with almost every narrative thread neatly tied up.

Because *A Hazard of New Fortunes* is an urban narrative predicated upon transit, the Marches' long travail in finding an apartment at the beginning of the novel is important in establishing the elevated train as a means of convenient and rapid conveyance in and around the city. The Marches reveal their collective naïveté about New York when they discuss what they consider to be easy prospects in finding an affordable flat to their liking; Isabel comments that "You can settle yourselves in a hundred different ways in New York; that *is* one merit of the place" (Howells 36). This inexperience is due in no small part to earlier trips to New York, some of which were described in the much earlier novel *Their Wedding Journey*, which first appeared in 1872 (Lopate viii). These earlier impressions of an older New York are important, and the

Marches soon begin to reminisce about them “before they set out on their search” (45).

Howells writes,

They recalled the Broadway of five, of ten, of twenty years ago, swelling and roaring with a tide of gaily painted omnibuses and of picturesque traffic that the horsecars have now banished from it. The grind of their wheels and the clash of their harsh bells imperfectly fill the silence that the omnibuses have left, and the eye misses the tumultuous perspective of former times. (45-46)

This passage performs a number of functions in the novel. First and foremost, it reflects the Marches’ early distaste for the “new” New York, apparent throughout the opening chapters of the novel. When, for example, Isabel discovers that Basil’s job offer is for an editorial position for the New York literary magazine *Every Other Week* and not for a position in her beloved Boston, her initial enthusiasm evaporates, and she cannot “approve” of the move because New York is “so *big*, and so hideous,” typical prejudices of middle-class Bostonians to this day (18). More importantly, this passage clearly indicates the Marches’ unwillingness to recognize parts of a modern urban reality for what they are: their romanticized picture of the “gaily painted omnibuses” of old New York stands in stark contrast to the clear threat these omnibuses¹¹ presented. As one writer for the *Herald* stated in 1864, “Modern martyrdom may be succinctly defined as riding in a New York omnibus” (qtd. in Brooks 8). Ticket lines were melees which posed a threat to anyone involved, and if one were so “lucky” as to obtain passage on one, he then faced seating himself on cushions “upon which millions of passengers have sat” and

¹¹ During this time, omnibuses were large carriages pulled by horses on the main thoroughfares of the city.

which were “saturated with their maleficent emanations” (qtd. in Brooks 8). And, this is to ignore completely the ease with which pickpockets made their living while riding the omnibuses about the city.

Most importantly, however, this passage establishes a comparison to the “new” New York, a landscape of utter disappointment for the newly-arrived Bostonians. For instance, the “new” Broadway, emblematic of a modern New York,

. . . is still Broadway in name, but now it is like any other street. You do not now take your life in your hand when you attempt to cross it; the Broadway police-man who supported the elbow of the timorous beauty in the hollow of his cotton-gloved palm and guided its little fearful boots over the crossing, while he arrested the billowy omnibuses on either side with an imperious glance, is gone, and all that certain processional, barbaric gaiety of the place is gone. (46)

This is, then, *the* transitional city to which the Marches have emigrated—a lawless, ugly, dangerous, and uncontrollable crush of humanity and traffic—and the city in which they must travel about to find a place to live. Long gone are the days of the relatively safe *flâneurie* described by Poe in his famous sketch “The Man of the Crowd.”¹² Footsore and disappointed by the foot traffic, the Marches decide upon the idea of a coupé (a smaller horse-drawn carriage) as a means to canvass more ground efficiently, but their decision coincides with a sharp decline in the quality and standards for apartments that guided their original trips around the city. More simply put, when they cannot find a

¹² Like Baudelaire in “The Painter in Modern Life,” I use Poe’s sketch as one of the earliest articulations of the now famous *flâneurie*, even though Poe uses London—not New York—as the setting for that work.

place meeting their original criteria for an apartment, the Marches begin to drive around through the crowded areas of the tenements, areas where “Ash barrels lined the sidewalks and garbage heaps filled the gutters”; where peddlars and drunkards and policemen and immigrants of every nationality mixed and mingled; and where “poverty as hopeless as any in the world” transmitted itself “from generation to generation . . . establishing conditions of permanency to which human life adjusts itself as it does to those of some incurable disease, like leprosy” (54-55). Because the stench of the gutter and the crush of a foreign-tongued humanity provide *too* much reality for the Marches in their open-roofed coupé, they finally settle upon the el as the ideal way to search for an apartment. The elevated roads may “kill the streets and avenues,” but part of their worth is that they also “partially hide” those streets, all the while “triumph[ing] over their prostrate forms with a savage exultation that is intoxicating” (52).

Unlike modernists like Dos Passos who were writing during the heyday of film experimentation, Howells has no cinematic language at his disposal to describe the kinetic pace and architectural disorder of *his* New York as viewed from the el. We must remember that at the time of *Hazard*’s publication (1889), it would be another six years before the Lumière brothers premiered their short films at Paris’s *Salon Indien du Grand Café*, thus initiating cinema as a new medium and art-form. This makes Howells’s lyrical, cinematic, and myth-like descriptions of the city all the more impressive. Consider, for example, the following passage:

The track that found and lost itself a thousand times in the flare and tremor of the innumerable lights; the moony sheen of the electrics mixing with

the reddish points and blots of gas far and near; the architectural shapes of houses and churches and towers, rescued by the obscurity from all that was ignoble in them; and the coming and going of the trains marking the stations with vivider or fainter plumes of flame-shot steam—formed an incomparable perspective. They [the Marches] often talked afterward of the superb spectacle, which in a city full of painters nightly works its unrecorded miracles; and they were just to the Arachne roof spun in iron over the cross street on which they ran to the depot; but for the present they were mostly inarticulate before it. (64-65)

Apart from the evocative pacing of this section, mimicking the ride of the elevated, the most salient feature is its randomness—the unexpected tremors, the sudden flares of electric light and steam, the disorderly skyline. This passage, with its attention to detail, could easily figure into a modernist city poem like Hart Crane’s *The Bridge* or a film noir study of the metropolis at night if it occurred forty or fifty years later. Visions of midnight construction-work contrast with the mythic web-like steel on which the city of the future would be erected, a scene lost on the slumbering and pedestrian alike. Only by riding the elevated—a wonder suspended between the second and third stories of the city’s buildings—are kinetic visions like this enabled, and they are the reason why March claims that the moon viewed from the elevated is “The most beautiful thing in New York—the one always and certainly beautiful thing here” (146).

The visions of the future that the elevated make possible are not entirely positive ones, however. Basil March attests that parts of the city like the Battery have “heights

and masses of many-storied brick-works for which architecture has yet no proper form and aesthetics no name” (273). Henry James angrily describes new architectural trends involving the skyscraper throughout *The American Scene* in terms of usurpation, impudence, and ugliness; he bemoans the fact that “tall buildings” have “so cruelly overtopped” the “spire of the Trinity Church” and other landmarks of old New York by 1907 (61). Moreover, New York’s disorderly architecture, in particular its skyline, is not altogether a result of the first skyscrapers and the Statue of Liberty, the then three-year old “colossal lady on Bedloe’s Island, with her lifted torch” (Howells 274). In areas like the Lower East Side, new floors were often added to the roofs of old two- and three-story tenements, sometimes doubling the number of floors and amount of living space, and this accounted for “that jag-toothed effect on the skyline so often observable” from the streets and the els (135). After becoming acquainted with the geography of the city, Basil better understands this phenomenon; as Howells writes, “The rear of the tenement houses showed him the picturesqueness [sic] of clothesline fluttering far aloft, as in Florence; and the new apartment houses, breaking the old skyline with their towering stories, implied a life as alien to the American manner as anything in continental Europe” (270). The skyline, simply put, acts as a confusing “social index,” a visual metaphor both “of vigor in the communities, of aspiration . . . of growth” (in terms of how a burgeoning middle-class might view it) as well as the uncontrollable growth of a city predominated by the tenements (Attoe 29, 36).

Only after Basil loses his emigrant status is he sufficiently able to read the skyline, the elevated, and the city itself. Prior to having this useful knowledge, he is as much a

stranger as are the ethnic groups he views in his travels around the city. Sociologist Georg Simmel, writing about the city at the turn of the century, notes that the modern stranger is a person “fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries” (qtd. in Iveson 72). His strangeness is “a product of an *arrival*,” the crossing of boundaries of a pre-existing group with the hope of staying” (Iveson 72). While Simmel was writing mostly about fin-de-siècle farmers moving to larger cities in Europe, his statements more than adequately apply to the conditions facing many of the characters, major and minor, in Howells’s novel. The burgeoning middle class in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* includes a class of emigrants rarely recognized as such—the nouveau riche from the American Midwest, a class to which Howells himself belonged. While they certainly have more upward mobility than the immigrants sailing into Ellis Island, they are strangers nevertheless, strangers in need of a new vocabulary, new notions of what it is to be modern, new ways of moving about and viewing the city. This knowledge of the markers of agency and cultural capital is, again, enabled by the el.

With the middle-classes’ dawning understanding of psychogeography¹³ comes a better appreciation for the complicated relationship that the elevated has with New York’s new immigrant population. The els provide numerous opportunities for voyeurism, creating a hierarchy of power between those who are watched and those who

¹³ I am drawing on Guy Debord’s concept of psychogeography, first articulated in his now famous essay “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography.” In it, Debord says of psychogeography, “It does not contradict the materialist perspective of the conditioning of life and thought by objective nature. Geography, for example, deals with the determinant action of general natural forces, such as soil composition or climatic conditions, on the economic structures of a society, and thus on the corresponding conception that such a society can have of the world. *Psychogeography* could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (qtd. in Coverley 88).

do the watching (and, in the case of Basil March, those who do the writing). This observation necessarily leads to a complex and specifically late nineteenth century incarnation of Foucault's concept of Panopticism. That is, the els provide democratic interiors—in which different ethnic groups seem to mingle freely—while simultaneously acting as strict demarcations of social space and control. Simply put, the location of the tracks—where they run as much as where they do not—actually serves as a constant reminder of specific ethnic segregation within the city; paradoxically, then, so-called public transit may be read as a technology created to limit certain people from traveling around New York.

Isabel's original fear of riding the elevated ("she used to say that nothing under the sun could induce her to travel on it") quickly disappears in the face of the sheer novelty riding the el provides for her, a novelty rooted in the inadvertent voyeurism it produces (64). Riding the el at night allows her a brief and "fleeting intimacy . . . with people in second- and third-floor interiors," and Basil, no stranger to the joys of the el, feels riding it affords him entertainment "better than the theater" (64). One image after another flies by, usually domestic: a working-class family having tea; women sewing by lamplight; a mother putting her child to bed; a girl talking to her lover from her window. The images soon overwhelm March, who uses his trips to plan city sketches for his magazine, and his rapture is only broken when the el stops for a minute at the "Forty-second street station" (64). For long intervals, time and space are one and the same (and in this sense the elevated also functions chronotopically within the novel), and this merger continually accumulates into an overwhelming sense of the "picturesque," the

“spectacle,” or the “panorama,” all labels that Basil uses to show his appreciation for *and* to distance himself from the city and its inhabitants (53).

More important than its use in describing the physical environment is Howells’s deployment of the “picturesque” as a way to create a narrative (and literal) space between the Marches and the immigrant populations they encounter. As Michael Brooks astutely argues, “The virtue of the picturesque is that it tames the visual uproar of the city and makes it enjoyable” at the same time that it makes “alien forms”—like the immigrant crowd of the tenement buildings—palatable (43-44). Quite early on in their initial journeys around New York, the Marches find themselves in Washington Square at a time when “The *primo tenore* statue of Garibaldi had not yet taken possession of the place” (47). Still, they manage to encounter a number of Europeans of “Latin extraction,” recognizing Italian, French, and Spanish people in the crowd (268). Howells then writes, “They met the familiar picturesque raggedness of southern Europe with the old kindly illusion that somehow it existed for their appreciation” (47). Basil even expresses “his tacit sympathy” with the immigrants by “letting a Neapolitan put a superfluous shine on his boots” (47). Like the Marches’ pining for the glory days of the omnibuses, the fact that they treat the foreign-born as personal entertainment or service illustrates their still-uninformed naïveté about the environment in which they live. Furthermore, this patronizing condescension when considering the picturesque is apparent throughout the novel, especially when Basil later rides through “the shapeless, graceless, reckless picturesqueness of the Bowery” (163). This later description quite literally “tames” a

much more dangerous and chaotic section of the city all the while preparing Basil for his first journey on foot through the Lower East Side.

Other writers identified the crowded areas in New York with these terms as well, always in an attempt to encapsulate categorically the more alien qualities of their subjects. One writer for the *Times* suggests that to get a taste of the “panorama,” readers should ride through the tenement districts at dinner time; between “Division-street” and Canal Street, they may view what looks to be “an orphan asylum,” with “a baby for every cobblestone . . . [,] a boy or a girl for every brick, and each one quite as dirty as the street they play in” (“Fast Time Up in the Air”). Henry James speaks of a sympathetic hypothetical writer and his relationship to the immigrant—considering that many an immigrant “may take his time . . . for becoming absorbed in the surrounding element” on his own terms—even as he condemns those who do not force the immigrant to assimilate (94). He writes:

I seem to find indeed in this latter truth a hint for the best expression of a whole side of New York—the best expression of much of the medium in which one consciously moves. It is formed by this fact that the alien is taking his time, and that you [the writer] go about with him meanwhile, sharing, all respectfully, in his deliberation, waiting on his convenience, watching him at his interesting work. The vast foreign quarters of the city present him as thus engaged in it, and they are curious and portentous and “picturesque” just by reason of their doing so. You recognize in them, freely, those elements that are not elements of swift convertibility, and you

lose yourself in the wonder of what becomes, as it were, of the obstinate,
the unconverted residuum. (94-95)

Notice that even in 1907, when the novelty of picturesqueness had clearly worn away, writers still centered the picturesque in specific areas of the city, James's so-called "vast foreign quarters." For James, the narrative and literal space allotted to the immigrant by labeling him as "picturesque" resulted in nothing less than "the million or so" unassimilated immigrants "annually knocking at our door" (66). Writing much earlier, Howells takes a much more democratic approach to the picturesque and helps to create an original view of the immigrant in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* through the character of Basil. After establishing his own place in New York via the booming success of *Every Other Week*, Basil continually finds himself lost in the "unconverted residuum" of the immigrant communities, reveling in the society "among the infants and dotards of Latin extraction in Washington Square" (268). Indeed, one of the Marches's chief pleasures is "the flavor of olives," the "sort which grew in New York, on lower Sixty Avenue and in the region of Jefferson Market and on the soft exposures south of Washington Square" (267). Howells's facetiousness aside, the taste of the olive is, for the Marches, indicative of the foreignness readily available in New York, and the continual spectacle provided by the foreign-born constitutes part of the fun in pursuing olives. Where else but in New York could Basil find a restaurant owned by "a French lady who had taken a Spanish husband . . . [,] had a Cuban Negro for her cook, with a cross-eyed Alsatian [sic] for waiter and a slim young South American for cashier" (267-268)?

Like the French-owned restaurant, public mass transit provides another of the few places where different ethnic communities may mingle. Both Howells and James note this, but with stunningly different emphases. Basil, the consummate *feuilletonist*,¹⁴ finds people-watching *in the el* as “entertaining” as viewing the panorama of their lives on the outside, especially on the “East Side” lines (162). These trains provide him with more fodder for his creative endeavors; as Basil sees it, the East Side routes “offered more nationalities, conditions, and characters to his inspection” (162). He distinguishes between “the uptown American region” and its inhabitants; the “picturesque admixture . . . of the American Hebrews”; Neapolitan construction workers; East Side Irish; “Russians, Poles, Czechs, Chinese . . . [,] Scandinavians”; and other non-descript peoples “of Germanic, of Slavonic, of Pelasgic”¹⁵ and “Mongolian” stock while riding the East Side lines (162-163). Howells does not offer this rather exhaustive delineation of ethnicities in the service of racial or national discrimination; instead, it is much more akin to “a Whitmanesque paradigm of democracy” in which all races eventually assimilate, mix, and combine into a distinctly *human* race (Lopate xvii). Indeed, as March views it, the very heterogeneity aboard the el secures “the future economy of our heterogeneous commonwealth” (Howells 163). Understandably, at this moment in the novel, Basil is more predisposed to extending sympathy to the people he normally enjoys watching from overhead. After all, the point of this particular trip is to offer his old

¹⁴ According to Walter Benjamin, the *feuilletonist*, or newspaper essayist, adapted “the gaze of the *flâneur*” and “still bestowed a conciliatory gleam over the growing destitution of men in the great city” (qtd. in Lopate xviii).

¹⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary defines “Pelasgic” or “Pelasgian” as a classical allusion referring to “A member of a supposed pre-Hellenic people inhabiting the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean” (“Pelasgian”).

friend Lindau—the German-born Civil War veteran-cum-socialist—a job translating foreign literature for *Every Other Week*. Because the elevated line extends only so far into the Bowery, Basil must walk part of the way to get to Lindau’s apartment, and this journey reacquaints him with the abject misery and suffering he too often casts as “picturesque.” Yet, while he does not forget the experiences of walking through Herr Lindau’s neighborhood, he does seem to suppress them ably afterwards, and, of course, he never writes the sketches he drew up in his head while observing that part of town. For all his enjoyment of the city’s racial and ethnic diversity, Basil does not take it all that seriously; his is an optimistic but essentially facile democratic view, obviously so when one analyzes his rather self-determined and rigid class affiliation, which I will consider later.

The “electric cars” of James’s *The American Scene* offer an entirely different perspective on the role of mass transit as a democratic space (95). Unlike Howells, James finds the car’s interior to be an utterly foreign and alienating place. The “carful” in 1907 is continually a “foreign carful . . . a row of faces, up and down, testifying, without exception, to alienism unmistakable, alienism undisguised and unashamed” (James 95). Whatever potential this site may have had for providing a place of assimilation and admixture was lost between 1889 and 1907; instead, according to James, the only ethnic coalescence to transpire was the unnatural solidification of the foreign into an impenetrable racial bloc. This bloc, a daily occurrence “in the Broadway and Bowery conveyances in especial,” represents nothing more than a totalizing “sense of

isolation” for the American-born observer, and the foreign faces on the trains serve as constant reminders of the area in which this bloc exercises its control (96).

Regardless of the way in which a writer views the ethnic and racial possibilities presented by the el, when it is coupled with the writer’s gaze, the elevated serves as a potentially powerful tool of social control, a latter day version of Jeremy Bentham’s *Panopticon*. Bentham’s famous design consists of a tower “pierced with wide windows” on all sides and a “peripheric building . . . divided into cells” with two windows (Foucault 200). With a supervisor in the tower, this “panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize instantly”; visibility functions as “a trap” for the inmates of the cells (200). Indeed, the most important function of the Panopticon is its ability “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power,” rendering constant surveillance “unnecessary” (201). Because of the unique quality of the design, anyone (supervisor and inmate) can use it, thus creating a dynamic if somewhat paradoxical power structure. Like the Panopticon, the power of the el “has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes”; it is “a machinery that assures” the “dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference” that is apparent in Howells’s work.¹⁶

¹⁶ This is also true in James’s *The American Scene*. In his work, the power paradigm is shifted; the profound sense of isolation and difference that James feels riding in the elevated is caused by the same panoptic gaze redirected towards the one non-foreign face on the el—his own. James’s discomfiture reinforces Foucault’s assertion that “He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (202-203). The faces that James observes in his car are “unmistakably . . . low” but “squared all solidly in their new security and portability,” a security effected by inverting the gaze of the author (96). James’s one consolation from this anxiety? He has the last (and published) word.

While March both aesthetically claims immigrant el-riders are picturesque and personally identifies himself with them, he also expresses some questions concerning their legitimacy, especially regarding the “Neapolitans from the constructions far up the line, where he had read that they are worked and fed and housed like beasts” on the West Side (162). Often, Howells writes, while March sits “listening to the jargon of their unintelligible dialect,” he wonders “as to what notion these poor animals formed of a free republic from their experience of life under its conditions” (162). Indeed, March even scrutinizes their collective characters and identity; March considers “whether they found them [their living conditions] practically very different from those of immemorial brigandage and enforced complicity with rapine under which they had been born,” a comment that clearly anticipates the brutal (social) Darwinism of naturalist works like Stephen Crane’s *Maggie* or Frank Norris’s *McTeague* (162-163). These “infrequent . . . however massive” effects of traveling through utter squalidness and indecency contribute to Basil’s preference for the pure picturesqueness of the East Side lines (163). Furthermore, the culmination of these observations and preferences reinforces his own sense of superiority among the passengers of the el and maintains for Basil and the reader a distinct hierarchy within the city.

March tacitly manages his sense of superiority via his continual plans for writing about the city, and these plans inevitably depend upon his role as an isolated, passive observer. For Basil, his passivity—“this immunity” and “touch-and-go quality” in his New York life—is a constant relief to “the intense identification” with class and space that marked his former life in Boston (268). Being able to sit on the el or on a park bench

in Washington Square to observe and to write about the lives around him is so much of a “relief” that, in fact, he refuses to “explore his conscience”; as Howells writes, Basil “liked now and then to feel his personality in that state of solution,” and in these moments of intense examination—noting characteristics, observing behavior—he crafts his work (268).¹⁷ The characteristics of those who ride the el (“the blond dullness of Germans; the cold quiet of Scandinavians—fire under ice”) serve as a means for March to translate the city, and he often uses a vocabulary of identification, construction, and, ultimately, control to do so (163). The characteristics of his fellow riders, Howells notes, “were aspects that he [March] identified and that gave him abundant suggestion for the personal histories he constructed” about them (163). He bases these stories on the most superficial (i.e. the most picturesque) characteristics of the immigrants aboard the el, and they have little if anything to do with the actual life experiences and “personal histories” of the people they portray. “It must be owned,” Howells writes, “that he did not take much trouble about . . . what these poor people were thinking, hoping, fearing, enjoying, suffering; just where and how they lived; who and what they individually were” (163). Yet, because the product of these excursions will inevitably wind up in *Every Other Week*—a literary magazine intended for middle-class readers (women, especially)—Basil’s passive “constructions” inevitably help to form public opinion about his subjects. His plan to capture immigrant life is far from passive, then. Only his own inability to see

¹⁷ He tries, however, to maintain a carefully cultivated ignorance of the poverty around him. He claims, “I don’t find so much misery in New York. I don’t suppose there’s any more suffering here to the population than there is in the country,” and later, upon viewing a “decent-looking man with the hard hands and broken nails of workman” eat a cracker that he found on the ground, he tells his wife, “Of course we might live here for years and not see another case like that; and of course there are twenty places where he could have gone for help if he had known where to find them” (52, 59).

through his plan of descriptive exposure limits his taking part in a larger system of controlling those who are markedly different from his own American nature.

Similarly, Basil's relationship with Lindau reveals his particularly strong middle-class affiliation—an allegiance he finds hard to forsake despite Lindau's hardships—and this only reinforces the novel's critique of the bourgeoisie's passivity and self-interest. While watching children play in the dirty streets on the way to Lindau's flat, March smiles and claims to understand “the unwillingness of the poor to leave the worst conditions in the city for comfort and plenty in the country” (166). Furthermore, “He said that if life appeared so hopeless to him as it must to the dwellers in that neighborhood, he should not himself be willing to quit its distractions, its alleviations, for the vague promise of unknown good in the distance somewhere” (166). These statements reflect March's personal satisfaction with having successfully resettled in the city and his complete inability to appreciate the real conditions Jacob Riis's so-called “other half,” a perspective embodied in the character of Lindau, whom Basil correctly deems “a hater of millionaires” (172). Lindau relocates himself to one of the city's poorest neighborhoods after living among those “pig pugs” in Greenwich Village because, as he tells Basil, “I foundt I was begoming a lidtle too moch of an aristograt” (168). After Basil attempts to justify the attitudes and exploitative behavior of millionaires (and, indirectly, the behaviors of his own class), Lindau angrily replies in German, “Do you think I knowingly gave my hand to save this oligarchy of trader and tricksters, this aristocracy of railroad wreckers and stock gamblers and mine slave drivers and mill serf owners? No; I gave it to the slave; the common slave—Ha! Ha! Ha!—whom I helped to unshackle to

the common liberty of hunger and cold” (171). His missing hand, lost as a result of his participation in the Civil War, is a constant reminder of the hollowness of American rhetoric regarding “such basic concepts as ‘freedom,’ ‘liberty,’ ‘the Civil War,’ ‘common reality,’ and ‘America,’” and his revolutionary rhetoric eventually costs him his translation job at *Every Other Week* when he butts head with Dryfoos (Kaplan 76).

After Basil weakly tries to defend Lindau as a patriot in the face of Lindau’s unceremonious dismissal, he also realizes that he cannot side with his friend’s radical politics, and, as a result, he quits the journal. But in this resignation Howells makes note that March only does so out of loyalty to class and his lifestyle, not out of any solidarity or sympathy for the working (and immigrant) classes. As Howells writes,

It was not merely the work in which he had constantly grown happier that he saw taken from him, but he felt the misery of a man who stakes the security and plenty and peace of home upon some cast, and knows that losing will sweep from him most that men find sweet and pleasant in life. He faced the fact, which no good man can front without terror, that he was risking the support of his family, and for a point of pride, of honor, which perhaps he had no right to consider in view of the possible adversity. He realized, as every hireling must, no matter how skillfully or gracefully the tie is contrived for his wearing, that he belongs to another, whose will is his law. (318)

What this passage reveals is the disconcerting fact that every person working for a wage, no matter how educated or how rarified the occupation, is continually at the mercy of

those controlling capital, a stunning realization for Basil. More troubling, however, is his unconscious rhetorical retreat behind the very ideals that Lindau exposes as hollow—meaningless words like “family” and “honor”—and his appeal to bourgeois notions of security and hearth, both enabled by the very exploitation of which he now feels a victim. In this gesture toward comforting rhetoric, Basil clearly stakes his place in the middle class, a position he will not sacrifice for his friend, and this only reinforces the geographical metaphor of the line, the very real but symbolic “east-west line beyond which they [the Marches] could not go if they wished to keep their self-respect” (50). Quite simply, Basil, like the rest of his class, will always prefer and retreat to his side of the line in a time of personal or class struggle, thereby cementing the potential for labor riots (like the one in the novel) and further proving the inefficacy of Basil’s—and the middle class’s—liberal democratic perspective on the city and the poor.

March’s distinct preference for one side of the city over another might very well influence and be influenced by an important but nevertheless underappreciated element regarding the elevated: its powerful influence on pre-existing boroughs and neighborhoods in New York. While the elevated allowed people living in newer portions of the city considerably more access to lower Manhattan,¹⁸ it also cut off other portions of the city; because of the elevated system’s north-south orientation, the el “bypassed the bulge of the Lower East Side,” bordering on the most crowded and poverty-stricken area of the city but never getting any closer to it than the line running through the Bowery (Brooks 46). This marginalization and peripheralization of the Lower East Side

¹⁸ For example, during this transitional period, Harlem—originally a “farming village” on the periphery of the city—was “transformed into New York’s ‘first suburb’” due to the elevated rail system’s completion in the late 1870s (Abu-Lughod 70, 73).

geographically isolated the community, and the tracks offered a clear demarcation of what amounted to, intentionally or not, forced ethnic segregation. As Howells notes in a description of the East Side, “For short distances the lowest poverty, the hardest pressed labor must walk” (163). Neighborhoods west of the elevated—including the more unsavory ethnic enclaves that would eventually evolve into Little Italy and Chinatown—were relatively more economically stable than the communities ‘across the tracks,’ and they also had better access to the amenities necessary for economic expansion and growth. New Yorkers visited these enclaves more frequently than areas like the Lower East Side because of the elevated, allowing for a flow of capital, investment, and resources that rarely made its way into the poorer, underdeveloped, and newer¹⁹ parts of the city. While the el allowed many individuals a chance to travel around the city in an efficient, safe, and cheap manner, it did little in the way of alleviating the pain and suffering of literally hundreds of thousands of people already living—or soon to live—in the slum-like conditions of the tenements. In fact, they may have made those conditions worse.

As this chapter clearly indicates, the elevated played a major role in the areas of the city that developed and modernized more quickly, influencing the way many New Yorkers perceived their growing city in the process. However, the scope of Howells’s *A Hazard of New Fortunes* is necessarily limited in part by the genteel realism with which he describes his city and his characters. Apart from Lindau, the working poor and the immigrant underclass remain largely faceless and anonymous, a troubling omission for a writer who sought “nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material”

¹⁹ Newer in the sense that the Lower East Side was, and still is, the area containing the most recently arrived immigrants in New York City. The Lower East Side’s close proximity to Ellis Island and industries like the garment factories are the main reasons for this.

rooted in common, increasingly urban(e) American life (qtd. in Hawes 116). In the next chapter, in which I examine the Brazilian naturalist Aluísio Azevedo's novel *The Slum*, we see more explicitly the underbelly of slum space, the threat of naked capitalism, and the gradual formation of middle-class neighborhoods out of depressed urban regions in Rio de Janeiro in the 1880s. Despite Azevedo's natural inclination towards bourgeois principles and the moral outrage with which he treats his slum-dwelling characters, he coldly analyzes the machinations of power and capital in his literary city and arrives at the conclusion that middle-class gentility—the kind espoused by Basil March and *Every Other Week*—is a hollow proposition, rooted in the pain and misery of those caught up in extreme poverty. Indeed, according to Azevedo's perspective, Basil March might very well be complicit in the sustained degradations of the colorful immigrant class he always wants to write about precisely because of his measured distance during his touristic perambulations around the tenements from those with whom he never fully identifies. If Basil is modeled on Howells himself, Howells's genteel critique of such behaviors is nevertheless central to the development of American literature's regard of those born outside its boundaries and movement toward a more critical realism.

Chapter III

Bringing the Crowd to Life, Building the Slums from Scraps: Brazilian Naturalism in Aluísio Azevedo's *The Slum*

In any protest against particular social conditions, these conditions themselves must have the central place.

—Georg Lukács²⁰

Aluísio Azevedo's depiction of Rio de Janeiro in the early 1880s, the setting of his 1890 novel *O cortiço* (*The Slum*), is a far cry from the Rio of today. Rio was then still Brazil's capital, remaining so until the government would relocate to the new city of Brasília in 1960, and Emperor Dom Pedro II—the Americas' only true monarchical emperor—still ruled his Brazilian empire until military officers overthrew him in a bloodless coup in 1889 and established Brazil's first republic. A year before the coup, Dom Pedro's daughter Princess Isabel drafted and signed into law an important piece of legislation that completely abolished slavery²¹ in Brazil during the height of a worldwide coffee boom, but this legislation did little to provide compensation for wealthy, influential slave-owners or to help former slaves effectively transition to a life of freedom. To replace the immediate loss of labor in the coffee fields and elsewhere, politicians used government funds to import labor from Europe; Brazil, like the US and Argentina, experienced immigration on a massive scale during the final two decades of the nineteenth century, absorbing millions of immigrants, primarily those of Italian,

²⁰ Quoted from page 29 of *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*. Trans. John and Necke Mander. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

²¹ The process of abolition in Brazil actually took seventeen years, occurring as a result of the enactment of three different laws. The first law was drafted in 1871, "when the Congress passed the 'law of the free womb,' which provided freedom for all children thenceforth born of slave mothers," although masters "were given the option of retaining labor rights over these children until the age of twenty-one" (Skidmore and Smith 154). The second abolitionist law, passed in 1885, "granted freedom to all slaves sixty or older, without compensation to the master" as did the so-called "golden law," the law finally abolishing Brazilian slavery for good (154).

Portuguese, Spanish, German, and Eastern European descent.²² Fearing the recent emancipation of Afro-Brazilian slaves and clearly anticipating the eugenic evolutions prompted by social Darwinist texts, some white Brazilian elites saw in this importation of European labor a specifically racial benefit, apart from the obvious economic ones—*branqueamento* (“bleaching”). This mass of white Europeans would naturally “help to ‘whiten’ Brazil’s population and dilute the influence of African and indigenous peoples,” many of whom were moving away from Brazil’s Amazonian interior to find work in agriculture or in the city (Beattie 45).

Added to these already complicated racial, political, and social upheavals were the changes wrought upon the physical landscape of Rio itself. The almost overnight massive increase in Rio’s population, as well as the generally “unsanitary nature of much of Rio’s low-income housing,” led many city planners to develop strategies to remove or relocate the urban poor (Gay 15). These plans ranged from persuading “industrialists to provide housing for their workers,” most of which were no better than the dwellings where they originally lived, to “the physical removal of working-class housing from downtown Rio and the forced relocation of the urban poor to the suburbs,” a popular practice with the state until 1904, when Rio politicians decided to redevelop²³ the poorer

²² While millions of immigrants—almost one third of whom were Italian—did resettle in Brazil, the “relative size of the immigrant population never reached the same level as it did in Argentina. The peak for Brazil was 6.4 percent in 1900, and it declined after that” (Skidmore and Smith 157).

²³ It was also in 1904 that many poorer cariocas (residents of Rio) took up arms against the state in what later become known as the Vaccine Revolt. Along with the new plans for spatial redevelopment, Rio politicians and health inspectors pursued a number of hygienic measures meant to wipe out vermin (especially rats and mosquitoes) and common diseases in Rio’s centrally located *cortiços*, including “yellow fever, smallpox and typhus” (Castro 178). Part of the plan was compulsory vaccination of Rio’s residents against smallpox, and many cariocas took to the streets in protest. Ruy Castro writes, “in November, they caused seven days and nights of violent chaos in the streets, with the destruction of lampposts, the burning of trams, attacks on the vehicles of sanitation services, the looting of warehouses,

sectors of their city (15). This cycle of relocation/removal and redevelopment has continued to today, erupting most notoriously in 1964 and 1965 when the Brazilian military, backed by Brasília's authoritarian dictatorship, claimed "the threat of a tiny urban *foco* of Marxist guerillas" and subsequently "razed 80 *favelas* and evicted almost 140,000 poor people from the hills overlooking Rio" (Davis 108). But like the failed attempts to destroy the favelas in the 1960s, "All attempts to rid Rio of its favelas have ended in failure," including those of new Republican industrialists at the turn of the century (Gay 14). These historical facts, then, are translated into the fictional representation of Azevedo's slum.

Along with his dramatist brother Artur, Aluísio Azevedo dominated the last quarter of Brazil's nineteenth-century literary universe. Azevedo was born in São Luís on April 14, 1857, to an aristocratic family; his father, David Gonçalves de Azevedo, was the Portuguese Vice-Consul in Maranhão (Hulet 4). After his studies, Azevedo eventually made his way to Rio and quickly became famous for satirical sketches, caricatures, and short stories, publishing these in a number of leading journals and newspapers. His second novel, *O mulato* (*The Mulatto*), was published to enough critical and commercial success in 1881 that Azevedo attempted "to live by his pen alone," but upon finding a limited (and for the most part disinterested) reading public, one especially unsympathetic to the brand of socially-conscious and cynical naturalism found in *The*

knife and pistol fights between the population and the police, which left many dead and wounded" (179). As was later revealed, the opponents of Brazil's president used the compulsory vaccination as a tool to whip up protests and incite rioting among the illiterates and less educated in Rio (180).

Slum,²⁴ he became a consul in 1895, traveling to Naples, Tokyo, Cardiff, and Buenos Aires (4). The final eighteen years of his life he did not write, famously complaining in a letter to a friend, “What’s the use of writing? For whom? We have no readers. A printing of two thousand copies takes years to sell out. . . . I’ve had it up to here with literature!” (qtd. in Rosenthal xii). He died in Buenos Aires on January 21, 1913.

The Slum depicts the social, racial, sexual, and economic development of Botafogo, a section of Rio now comprised of businesses and middle-class residences. More specifically, Azevedo’s novel charts two different intersecting narratives over the course of its progression. The first is that of Portuguese bar-owner João Romão’s gradual ascension into the ranks of Rio’s wealthy land-owning middle class through the construction and exploitation of his slum, São Romão, his story ending in his rejection and betrayal of his black lover Bertoleza—who remains a slave despite the fact that she lives with João—in favor of his white, wealthy neighbor’s daughter Zulmira. The second storyline plots the intensely sensual love affair between Rita Bahiana, a seductive mulatta from north-east Brazil (her nickname indicating that she is from the state of Bahia), and Jerônimo, first introduced as a strongly built, hardworking, and pious Portuguese immigrant and laborer. Jerônimo abandons his wife Piedade de Jesus (who eventually

²⁴ In the foreword to her *Resisting Boundaries: The Subject of Naturalism in Brazil*, Eva Paulino Bueno discusses the overtly political and aesthetic reasons why naturalism as a whole did not successfully take root in Brazil. In her analysis of five naturalist novels, she states that these novels “portray tensions caused by the realignment, or, better still, the sudden visibility of people such as strong women, blacks, mulattoes, and homosexuals in Brazilian literature. The standard reading has seen their appearance as a mere function of a ‘mechanistic’ view of existence, or of naturalism’s preference for the ugly, lowly, and revolting aspects of life” (ix). Historically, these subjects have been considered “unworthy of representation” in Brazil, and naturalism “challenges canonical principles of representation so profoundly that naturalist aims have to be rendered unrepresentable—servile—all over again” (32). In light of the increasing influence of a military presence and the optimistic forging of a new Republic, which took as its motto the positivist “Order and Progress,” Bueno describes Brazil’s “poor assimilation” of naturalism as an effect of a very real “lack of political sponsorship” (32).

becomes a drunk) for Rita, and throughout their love affair, he becomes more and more ‘American’ and Brazilian, forsaking work to drink rum-laced coffee and cane alcohol, to eat spicy Brazilian food, and to play his guitar. Equally as important as these storylines are to the development of the novel is the metamorphosis of São Romão itself, starting out as slum and progressively improving until it becomes as respectable as its owner. However, true to the spatial history and evolution of Rio as a city, Azevedo also introduces a neighboring slum, found on the same street as São Romão, called “Cat Head,” a bitter rival of João’s slum that soon absorbs those unable to afford the increased rents or higher costs of living on João’s property. As São Romão enjoys its new found prosperity, eventually becoming middle class with an avenue of its own, Cat Head finds itself on a downward trajectory, fundamentally surrendering—as if the slum were a character in the novel—to the degradations and devolution central to most naturalist fiction. Ultimately, Azevedo’s novel examines the competing narratives of those daily affected by unchecked capitalism in a time and place where exploitation exists in every facet of life and where everything—often including the body itself—is up for sale, uniquely capturing the successes and failures of the slum in a purely naturalist matrix—a fiery, salacious, sharp-tongued, and unapologetically Brazilian naturalism, no less.

One of the most notable features of Azevedo’s novel is the way that he meticulously documents both João’s intense desire to build a slum and the labors that bring about its construction. Historically, the most common living quarters for slum dwellers have been tenements and cheap, “purpose-built rental housing,” domestic spaces often proving to be “horribly overcrowded, unsanitary, but highly profitable” for their

owners (Davis 34). This is as true today as it was in Azevedo's time. In present-day Lima, for example, many districts called *callejones* were funded and built by the Catholic Church (one of the city's largest landholders and its "leading slumlord," according to Mike Davis) specifically to be rented to the poor; the housing amounts to "miserable dwellings made out of adobe or *quincha* (wood frames filled with mud or straw), which deteriorate rapidly and are often dangerously unstable" (34). That Azevedo spends much of the first chapter noting the cheap construction material João uses to build his slum is, therefore, historically accurate and pertinent to his naturalist critique of the slum. "What prodigies of cunning and frugality he [João] realized" in the construction of his first slum houses, Azevedo notes (4). Initially he is his own bricklayer, mixing and toting the mortar to his construction sites himself. He cuts and shapes stolen granite from a nearby quarry, and, with the help of Bertoleza, nightly robs "all the nearby construction sites" (4). Enabled by the fact that "in those days policemen were rarely seen around Botafogo," João and Bertoleza work as a team, one "carrying planks, bricks, roof tiles, and sacks of lime," even "bricklayers' ladders, sawhorses, benches, and carpenters' tools," while the other stands as a look-out (4).

Eventually, when he amasses enough money from the net profits he enjoys by stealing construction material, selling stolen goods, charging high rent, and generally collecting every centavo he can get by cutting corners (even sacrificing his favorite food—eggs—so that he can instead sell them), João then moves on to more legitimate means of collecting material. Azevedo writes,

He showed up wherever construction materials were auctioned, buying

used lumber and secondhand tiles, bargaining for bricks and lime. He dumped it all in his backyard, which soon began to look like an enormous barricade, so varied and bizarre were the objects piled up there: boards and slats, tree trunks, masts from ships, rafters, broken wheelbarrows, clay and iron stovepipes, dismantled braziers, piles and piles of bricks in every shape and size, barrels of lime, mountains of sand and red earth, heaps of tiles, broken ladders and everything else under the sun. (8-9)

João's personal living space begins to mimic the informal nature of the slum he builds from the ground up, evidenced by Azevedo's painstakingly detailed tally of materials that Romão himself probably knows by heart, miserly as he is. He approaches his acquisition of land and property in the same haphazard, catch-as-catch-can manner. "Twenty-four square feet today, another thirty-six tomorrow, a few more the day after—the tavern keeper gradually annexed all the territory behind his store; and as his conquests grew," Azevedo grimly comments, "so did the number of houses and tenants" (4). Furthermore, it is João himself who provides the protection he needs in his slum, buying himself "a fierce bulldog to stand watch" over his junk piles at night because he knows, from personal experience, no doubt, "how easily such things could be stolen" (9). Like Europe's contemporaneous mad scramble for land in Africa and Brazil's own territorial struggles with Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina a little over twenty years earlier,²⁵ João

²⁵ Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay fought intermittently from 1852 to 1870 over politics and control of the Río de la Plata basin. After Uruguay and Brazil defeated an intensely nationalist Argentine coalition led by the authoritarian leader Juan Manuel de Rosas and in turn lost their own control of Uruguay, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina (now on friendly terms with Brazil) fought against Paraguay for five years, ultimately defeating them. Brazil's victory resulted in better Brazilian access to the Río de la Plata river network, a stronger alliance with a liberal Argentina, and more economic and political presence in Uruguay (Skidmore and Smith 152).

Romão successfully expands his own empire, rapidly acquiring land, developing it as cheaply as possible, charging high rent for relatively squalid living areas, and continually reinvesting his capital in new land. He becomes so successful that he ends up “purchasing a good part” of a neighboring rock quarry that allows him even more opportunities for cheap investments and high returns, and in the process he “begins to generate a machine which has the ability of reproducing itself”—a crude but effective capitalist economy, complete with a totalizing commoditization of labor, resources, and space; fetishization; prostitution; abject misery; and degradation (4; Bueno 65). More simply put, he creates a thoroughly modern slum.

The slum is, then, João’s dream, his brain-child. Every yard he acquires “would be worth their weight in gold once he carried out a scheme he had been hatching,” the construction of “a huge, unprecedented warren of two-room houses, a slum that would overshadow the smaller ones scattered around Botafogo” (8). But his dream comes at a dear cost to the person who becomes his lover, though not his *love*—Bertoleza, a thirty-year-old slave. Although some of the seed money for his initial investment in land comes from his wages as the manager of “a dingy and squalid but profitable tavern and general store in the back streets of Botafogo”—money and property that he eventually receives when the owner returns to Portugal—most of the money that João uses to buy his first plot of land comes from Bertoleza (1). After her original lover dies, she confesses everything to João regarding her economic situation, including information about her monthly payment of twenty mil-réis to her owner and “the money she had secretly saved to buy her freedom” (2). Romão gains her trust to the extent that Bertoleza not only

moves in with him and cooks in the tavern but also asks him to keep the money she saves to buy her freedom. Despite the fact that she works for him, however, she “does not have the status of an employee” and finds herself at the mercy of an economy regulated not only on “trust and mutual respect” but also by more sinister social and racial inequalities (Bueno 65). He purchases his first land with her savings, and he legitimizes the purchase by forging an official-looking document “covered in scribbles” with a stamp affixed that he reads aloud to her, announcing that he has bought her freedom (Azevedo 3). Illiterate and naïve, she trusts him, subscribing only to the fact that he “is white, Portuguese, and the proprietor of a tavern” and as such is “endowed with a certain social superiority” relative to her status as an illiterate black Brazilian woman (Bueno 65). By voluntarily giving her savings to him and believing in the forged document, she unwittingly traps herself in a finer net of slavery because she remains a slave who “believes herself free” only then to work much harder out of sheer gratitude (65).

In Brazilian Portuguese, *O cortiço* has multiple definitions. Apart from generally meaning ‘the slum,’ *o cortiço* also refers to single “rented rooms in inner-city tenements . . . half of which were built as tenements, the other half hand-me-downs from the urban bourgeoisie” in São Paulo, prior to the “peripheral favela boom that began in the early 1980s” (Davis 34). Finally, and perhaps most interesting of all, *cortiço* also means “bee-hive,” a fact not lost on Azevedo, as he continually employs insect, animal, and vegetal metaphors to describe João’s property and tenants. Quarry laborers soon relocate to the slum to be closer to work, and both an Italian pasta factory and a candle factory soon move in afterwards; every morning workers making their way to work

contribute to the “buzzing crowd” of awakening slum dwellers (Azevedo 22). “Like a line of ants, women entered and left” João’s tavern and general store daily, often taking loans from him at “8 percent monthly interest” until “workers’ entire salaries ended up in his pockets” (22, 10). Because São Romão has direct access to clean water, washtubs are soon provided at five hundred réis a day but free to women who live there, attracting even more tenants. With the addition of clean, soapy water, the slum becomes alive as an organic, musky, humming entity unto itself: “And on the muddy ground covered with puddles, in the sultry humidity, a living world, a human community, began to wriggle, to seethe, to grow spontaneously in that quagmire, multiplying like larvae in a dung heap” (12). Every morning, “like a vine hungrily plunging its roots into life’s black and nourishing mire, São Romão seethed with the animal joy of existence, the triumphant pleasure of simply breathing” (22). The buildings themselves, according to Affonso Romano de Sant’Anna, multiply and replicate according to a phenomenon similar to “cell division by meiosis”; the first “cell” of the novel—the first house João builds—divides and multiples until “we arrive at four hundred houses” (217). Thus does the capitalist machine profitably mimic nature itself.

Azevedo’s patent depersonalization through systematic and cynical zoomorphization and his desire to concentrate on the life of a community rather than on that of an individual are two of the clearest manifestations of naturalism in his novel. Many critics of *The Slum*, including Sant’Anna and João Sedycias, have noted that Azevedo, unlike typical realists and naturalists, focuses on a larger community rather than any particular character. By contrast, Howells’s increasingly disparaging and

skeptical realism in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* still manages to follow the life of Basil March in New York, and texts such as *Maggie*, *Sister Carrie*, and *McTeague*—undoubtedly the best representations of US naturalism—also primarily chart the downward trend of their respective central characters. Maggie finds herself progressively more alienated from and rejected by her tenement home until she becomes a prostitute and dies on the street; while Carrie successfully manipulates her appearance, her environment, and her relationships to become a star, others starve; and McTeague devolves so much because of his greed that he dies a horrifically animalistic death in the blazing alkali sands of a California desert. Of all the characters in *The Slum*, João Romão comes closest to legitimate in-depth development, especially considering the pages Azevedo devotes to elaborating both João’s psychological motivation for wanting to build the slum and, after a few years of his successfully micromanaging its fortunes, his intense jealousy and burning desire to secure a title and legitimize his property in the eyes of his neighbor Miranda, who becomes “the Baron of Freixal” (90). But even so, he is by no means a central character. Sedycias, comparing three inter-American naturalist novels (*The Slum*, *Maggie*, and Mexican novelist Federico Gamboa’s *Santa*), sees in Azevedo’s particularly wide focus a devotion to naturalism’s socio-scientific emphasis on environmental determinism as the ultimate factor in evolution or devolution. Given that Azevedo considers the slum a malignant organism in its own right—sometimes he refers to it as a tree or a living wave, and it clearly represents what critic Mausaud Moisés calls “one of the ulcers of 19th-century Rio de Janeiro”—his decision to take a much broader authorial gaze and to examine the slum’s dysfunctional and pathological effects on

groups of people (immigrants, blacks, mulattos, illiterate laborers, prostitutes) fits perfectly with the project of naturalism, more so than the somewhat romantic notion of an individual protagonist's rise and fall (qtd. in Sedycias 35).

A more interesting interpretation of Azevedo's insistence on the collective rather than the individual is that of Bueno's notion regarding the novel as a collection of interlocking stories rooted in distinct conflicts "of hegemonic representation" (75). Azevedo's representation of the slum, she argues, as "an urban living space, or as a 'city' (opposed to, say, a more rural area) calls attention to the specific characteristics of this space as both a confluence of forces previously scattered in geographically distinct regions, and as an optimal condition for these forces to fight one another over issues of hegemonic representation" (74-75). Sex figures heavily in this critique, especially in Bueno's analysis of the other successful capitalist in the novel, Pombinha, daughter of Dona Isabel and the eventual lesbian lover and astute student of the French prostitute Léonie. Like João, Pombinha the prostitute wields by far the strongest influence over her clients, intuitively understanding how to manipulate all men, whom she describes as "an army of sensual beasts" that act like the character Domingos, a poor laborer who throws away "his job and all the money he had scrapped together just for a few minutes' pleasures between the legs of some stupid girl" (Azevedo 122). Pombinha demonstrates exceptional skill at giving men what they want at her price, and eventually she moves out of the slum and into a wealthier section of the city. Despite the fact that she is a "pale violet, rare and delicate, raised in a dung heap whose manure proved too strong for her to bear" (and even though she will always be a prostitute, carrying the soil of the slum with

her, much like the description of Maggie in Crane's novella), Azevedo suggests that Pombinha's eventual ascent to middle-class stability can be traced back to her success in manipulating all the (male) characters in a way that benefits her, much like João's authoritarian presence in the slum serves him well (122-123).

Azevedo's naturalistic willingness to write boldly about and to describe in detail the most violent and salacious encounters that occur in the slum—including widespread adultery across racial and social castes as well as lesbian sex—coincides with a real struggle over the body, its representation, and its uses in literature. Zola's comments in the preface to *Thérèse Raquin*'s second edition prove useful in underscoring the importance of the body (or bodies) as both an object for naturalism and a site of its conflicts. He writes:

In *Thérèse Raquin* my aim has been to study temperaments and not characters. That is the whole point of the book. I have chosen people completely dominated by their nerves and blood, without free will, drawn into each action of their lives by the inexorable laws of their physical nature. Thérèse and Laurent are human animals, and nothing more. I have endeavored to follow these animals through the devious working of their passions, the compulsion of their instincts, and the mental unbalance resulting from a nervous crisis. The sexual adventures of my hero and heroine are the satisfaction of a need, the murder they commit a consequence of their adultery, a consequence they accept just as wolves accept the slaughter of sheep. And finally, what I have had to call their

remorse really amounts to a simple organic disorder, a revolt of the nervous system when strained to breaking-point. There is a complete absence of soul, I freely admit, since that is how I meant it to be.

(23)

The (pseudo-)scientific laws Zola establishes in his novel, the zoomorphization of Thérèse and Laurent into human animals and “wolves,” and his early attempts to link psychology and biology should be noted. The body dominates the discourse here because Zola roots his “temperaments” in blood and nerve, in muscle and sex, rather than any romantic notion of abiding self or human agency. The inflexible law of nature meets the soft flesh of humankind, much to the detriment of man, and with the introduction of business and capital (systems that establish and obey their own unbending internal logics), man really does seem caught up in a hopeless situation.

Zola’s commentary on his own work is useful in applying it to *The Slum*²⁶ (13).

Like animals, Azevedo’s characters seek satisfaction in cheap alcohol, bad food, and in the arms of their neighbors and illicit, backdoor lovers; those who wield more money simply have more access to the elimination of pain and the reproduction of pleasure. Remorse—markedly a human trait—is a weakness left to those who have nothing else with which to cling; for every Bertoleza, who is “without the courage to stand up for her rights” and used to “serving as a kind of draft animal,” there is a João Romão, who

²⁶ Indeed, as Dorothy Loos notes, Azevedo originally wanted to write a long “comprehensive” cycle of fictions similar in scope and size to that of Zola’s corpus, which Azevedo started with his novel *Casa de Pensão* (*The Boarding House*) (73). “The action in the series,” Loos continues, “would have begun at the time of the Independence and ended about 1886 or 1887, years not yet transpired at the time Azevedo published his plan,” but he was unsuccessful in “transplanting to the tropics a picturesque branch of the genealogical tree of the Rougon-Macquart family” and adopted and employed Zola’s other naturalist tendencies instead (73).

proves remorseless in his exploitation of the slum and its residents (Azevedo 172).

There is clearly a dog-eat-dog world. But, most importantly, if the project of naturalism is a literary experimentat regarding survival and environmental determinism on all levels—the fictional equivalent of “the analytical method that surgeons apply to corpses”—the dialectic Azevedo creates between Cat Head and São Romão should be explored further, if only to examine how his particular brand of naturalism applies externally to city spaces as much as it does to the people living in them (Zola 23). Unlike Howells’s brand of optimistic bourgeois realism that tries to avoid a categorically deterministic universe, Azevedo’s critique of urban slum spaces advances a more realistic depiction of the urban poor and their living conditions.

Cat Head emerges as a rival slum on the same street as São Romão at a time when João’s slum experiences a sharp influx of new tenants creating a higher demand for already limited space; subsequently, “each two-room house was subdivided into cubicles the size of coffins,” Azevedo writes, “and the women kept bearing children with the regularity of a herd of cows” (125). Azevedo emphasizes in his critique of slum exploitation that Cat Head “belonged to a rich alderman of refined manners whose social standing forbade him to openly invest in such ventures,” reflecting a trend that would have dire consequences for Brazilian slum dwellers in the 20th century when the practice of selling slum votes for favors became a standard political strategy in elections nationwide (125; Gay 2). To safeguard his personal investments in the success of São Romão, João begins “to attack his rival with the weapons at his disposal, bribing inspectors and policemen to plague his new neighbors with fines and summonses, while he inculcated a

deep hatred of Cat Head's inhabitants among his tenants. Anyone who refused to go along was summarily evicted" (Azevedo 126). His ploy works, much to his delight, and through his instigation an almost feudal system of residential loyalty replaces the previous class-based antagonisms João's tenants felt for him; indeed, through a masterful manipulation of his tenants, João finds that instead of resulting in a loss of money, the "influx of newcomers had worked to his advantage" (127). His "silver jennies," residents of São Romão named after the slum's most popular fish at Bertoleza's stand, quickly raise a defiant red flag in response to Cat Head's yellow one, and sympathetic, "partisan" policemen, found in both slums, exercise their authority to antagonize and to physically abuse rival slum dwellers (126). By actively provoking bitter enmity between those of the same class, João successfully reflects criticism away from his business practices and uses his tenants' misguided hate as a way to protect his own investments in land and property. Quite simply, he has generated an army of poor people to protect his feudal empire and, at the same time, has also found a way to let the poor indirectly incriminate and exploit themselves.

The seething antagonism between Cat Head and São Romão explodes when what begins as a local fight between two jealous women quickly escalates into an all-out slum war: "A tremendous commotion arose, swiftly turning into a formidable brawl, a genuine free-for-all that shook São Romão like an earthquake—no longer between two women but now involving some forty strong men" (159). The riot factions seem to break organically along national lines, Portuguese siding with other Europeans and Brazilians backing up each other, until Cat Head, sensing the disturbance, marches down the street

en masse to attack its rival, in part “to avenge the death of their chief, Firmo” (160). At this point personal grievances are set aside to defend São Romão. The free-for-all—with men, women, and children on both sides armed to the teeth—continues until a huge fire threatens to destroy everything, and, in an instant, “the entire scene was transformed: those who so casually risked their lives in the two fights hastened to save their few miserable belongings” (162-163). Even the residents of Cat Head, “honorable after their fashion,” abandon the war to help fight the fire, which rages through the night (162).

This slum fire proves to be the pivotal moment in the economic, social, and physical battle between both slums. The fire destroys “thirty-odd houses,” and two old residents—Bruxa (“witch” in Portuguese), the “half Indian and half crazy” woman who intentionally started the fire to burn down the slum, and Libório, an ancient, toothless, miserly, and semi-homeless Jew—die in it as well (166, 24). João, ever on the prowl for money even as his own property burns, manages to steal Libório’s savings, collected in a half-dozen glass bottles, and watches as the old man burns. He also profits magnificently from the insurance policies he placed on his property after a first fire, which will bring in “a tidy profit,” and he happily explains to Miranda his intentions for the newly vacated properties while the residents of São Romão walk about the ruins of their homes dazed by their overnight losses (167). His plans include the decisions

to expand São Romão into the vacant lot in back, and on the left, up Miranda’s wall, he would build another row of houses using part of the courtyard, which didn’t need to be so big. He would build a second story onto the others, with a long, railed veranda. He could make a lot more

from four or five hundred houses, renting for twelve to twenty-five mil-réis, than from a hundred. (167)

Much like the developments in New York City's Lower East Side at the same time, verticalization signals the growing index of wealth and investment in João's property, even if it does not lead to an increase in the standards of living for his renters. João employs his residents to throw up new houses quickly in place of those that the city deems uninhabitable, and, at reduced rates, he houses those long-time residents who lost their homes in the fire. Most significantly, "No one moved to Cat Head," Azevedo notes, precisely because residents prefer to live in a place where money and investments in new facilities and infrastructure are highly visible, especially after the fire, as opposed to taking their chances in another slum (170). Ironically, such development is at the cost of the only life spirit the slum dwellers possess, despite the strictures of their poverty.

Construction progresses at an even faster rate now than earlier in the novel, and for the first time João uses his money to improve significantly his own house. Saving only the thickest walls from the original frame, he chooses to "broaden the doors" into veritable bourgeois "arches," "raise the ceilings, and build a house taller than Miranda's and far more imposing" (171). He even decides to convert Bertoleza's old room, the kitchen, and the eating-house into a thoroughly middle-class "store where his business could grow and flourish" (171). Accompanying this continual construction is an emergent sea change in the characteristics of the slum itself; São Romão loses its "old character" in the process of reconstruction, and a certain officiousness, even blandness, replaces the "sharply defined and yet so varied" personality of the slum (171). A

creeping middle-class sensibility seems to enervate the former vibrancy and vitality of former slum space; the courtyard shrinks to make room for new buildings, and the buildings themselves seem to reconfigure naturally and realign themselves until they look “more like a street” (180). To reinforce this change, pavement replaces slum soil, street lights are installed “at regular intervals,” and João eliminates the former uniqueness of each individual slum house under a superficial but uniform veneer of freshly painted “white walls, green doors, and red eaves and drainpipes” (181). Once São Romão looks middle-class, it becomes middle-class, a gentrification we see occur in numerous city spaces and times.

What truly cements the former slum’s status as a newly minted middle-class space is a combination of self-propelled wealth, power, and maintenance. João profits literally from increased space utilization and better products and metaphorically from the distinction he earns as a result of his union with Zulmira, Miranda’s daughter, and the productive alliance that such weddings produce in the business world. He begins to limit who can and cannot rent from him; by requiring “security deposits and letters of recommendation” from new tenants, he forces a number of “old paupers,” especially Italian immigrants, out of São Romão and into Cat Head (198). This new infusion of poverty further degrades Cat Head, which, in indiscriminately taking all poor newcomers—including alcoholic Piedade and her daughter—seems more and more like an inescapable cesspool. Indeed, Azevedo writes, “as São Romão put on airs,” Cat Head grew more squalid, more sordid, more abject and slummy, thriving on the scum and garbage the other place rejected, as though its goal were to

preserve forever, in a pure state, a classic example of one of Rio de Janeiro's hellholes: a place where every night brings a samba party and a brawl, where men are murdered and the police never find out who did it, a breeding ground for lustful larvae where brothers and sisters sleep together in the same slime, a paradise for vermin, a swamp of hot, steaming mud where life sprouts savagely, as from a garbage dump. (201-202)

In short, "Cat Head has been defeated, vanquished forever" by the flow of capital into João's property (183). Despite the fact that São Romão originates from the same organic, protean soup as Cat Head, its fortunes lie elsewhere, built on systematic exploitations of labor and sex and ignorance. Given his patently naturalistic (and moralistic) language when describing the new slum, Azevedo does not appear hopeful that Cat Head will experience the same evolution apparent in São Romão; indeed, with the wedding of naturalist critique and his trenchant analysis of Brazilian belle époque capitalism, Azevedo indicates that the fortunes of one slum are necessarily predicated on the suffering of another, just as the middle-class amenities Basil March enjoys depend on a class and economic system that leads to well-dressed men scavenging for food in garbage cans. In any large city, as Basil's wife laments, "such things are possible" (Howells 60).

This is not to say, however, that João Romão and his property's rise to prominence—or Basil's rise and Lindau's fall—are in any way vindicated or excused by natural selection or biological and evolutionary determinism. What is most significant about *The Slum* as a naturalist novel is that Azevedo carefully constructs and unfolds the illegitimate and informal history of the slum in order to denaturalize and rewrite the

genteel legitimacy that São Romão and Botafogo claim for themselves by the end of the novel and the turn of the century. In directly linking the initial purchase of slum space to a nexus of frustrated inheritance (the squalid tavern's profits and João's share in it), slavery, sexual repression and labor exploitation, illiteracy, and outright theft and murder, Azevedo rewrites the history of the slum as a place that tends to collect *naturally* the dregs of society, instead viewing it as place intentionally created and manipulated to do so as part of a larger scheme founded upon that original greed. Despite the original sins that constitute the foundation of this place of rather ill-repute, São Romão becomes a legitimate place to live and work by the end of the novel, eventually earning official sanction with the introduction of a sign ("São Romão Avenue") and a more professional and upscale clientele of government workers and actors who wear "neckties, shoes, and socks" (183, 182). By denaturalizing the historical myth of the middle-class neighborhood as anything other than the result of economic inequality and exploitation, Azevedo questions the pretensions held by a burgeoning middle class and attempts to redress the inaccuracies inherent in their perceived attitudes towards slum spaces, going so far as to balance his sharpest moral outrage at the conditions of Cat Head by his regarding São Romão's ascension to the ranks of the middle-class as putting "on airs" (201). As Eva Bueno eloquently writes, the machine "made of stocks, mortgages, and foreign titles" that Azevedo so vehemently critiques in *The Slum*—the machine founded on the original scrap of paper meant to fool Bertoleza all the way to the wedding certificate signed by João and Zulmira—requires the very "humanity of the tenement house" to run efficiently (83). And in Azevedo's bleakly naturalist universe, at a time

when mechanization and industrialization were first beginning to take hold of Brazil and carry it into the 20th century and a new industrial age, he had the foresight to recognize that the machine almost always wins.

Despite his critique of savage capitalism in *The Slum*, Azevedo was by no means an overtly socialist- or Marxist-oriented individual, as is clear by the moral overtures he makes throughout his naturalist depiction of the slum. This is not true of the next novel under consideration in this study, John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, a novel that more clearly addresses political issues related to the constant development of urban space in modern Manhattan. Although nearly thirty years separate *The Slum*'s publication and that of *Manhattan Transfer*—a span in which the US effectively ended its isolationism, took part in heavy industrialization as a result of World War I, and dutifully marched along towards its place as an advanced world superpower—the underlying projects of each novel are not nearly as divergent as they would first appear. In fact, the formal experimentation within *Manhattan Transfer* is motivated in large part by Dos Passos's desire to capture the urban experience more accurately, a move toward actuality which happens to be the backbone of the realist and naturalist movements. The fact that he does so subjectively, without crafting a traditional linear narrative or an artificial plot, is the most distinguishing marker of his project when compared to Azevedo's, but Dos Passos's critique of unchecked capitalism and his willingness to expose the hypocrisies of the upper classes is nevertheless as strong as the critique within *The Slum*. Viewing both novels side by side most notably reveals similar desires to describe city spaces and slums as accurately as possible, but for radically different political and, to a lesser extent,

aesthetic agendas, given the transition between Azevedo's apolitical naturalist critique and Dos Passos's overt political critique.

Chapter IV

To the Real City, Toward the Total Text: Abstraction and the City in John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*

The history of Architecture unfolds itself slowly across the centuries as a modification of structure and ornament, but in the last fifty years steel and concrete have brought new conquests which are the index of a greater capacity for construction, and of an architecture in which the old codes have been overturned. If we challenge the past, we shall learn that “styles” no longer exist for us, that a style belonging to our own period has come about; and there has been a revolution.

—Le Corbusier²⁷

The art of Dos Passos consists of a series of techniques aimed at making the realist illusion persuasive, communicating to the reader the sensation of being directly confronted with life, the objective world of what is narrated, without the mediation of literature and of the author. The whole of the novel is made up of a series of pictures . . . which combine in a great mosaic: the protoplasm of New York.

—Mario Vargas Llosa²⁸

In the introduction to *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*, Janet

Galligan Casey observes that although John Dos Passos “is frequently mentioned in general studies of the period, acknowledged as an innovative narrativist, and noted as the most celebrated artistic figure of the American Left, his vision is virtually never perceived as central to an understanding of American modernism” (2). This general trend regarding his place may be rooted in the way Dos Passos scholars have approached his career. Many critics view his early work like *Three Soldiers* (1921) and *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) mainly as a “gateway” to his *USA* trilogy—*The Forty-Second Parallel* (1930), *1919* (1932), and *The Big Money* (1936) (Harding 97). Accentuating *USA* as the pinnacle of a lifelong career in letters relegates those early novels—especially *Manhattan*

²⁷ Quoted from page 269 in *Towards a New Architecture*. Trans. Frederick Etchells. New York: Dover, 1986.

²⁸ Quoted from page 159 of “John Dos Passos: *Manhattan Transfer*” in *Making Waves* Ed. and Trans. John King. New York: Penguin, 1996.

Transfer—to a subordinate position within US modernist literature, however justified that assessment may be, and it also risks ignoring the slew of novels and nonfiction published after the trilogy’s completion.

A more likely explanation regarding his position relative to canonical US modernists (compared to Hemingway, Eliot, Pound, and Faulkner, for example) relates to the aesthetic movements and political groups with which he associated after World War I and throughout the 1930s. Despite his committed affiliation with the Left, his work was nevertheless attacked “for being too experimental by his fellow proletarian artists,” and, in turn, his politics alienated some of his fellow modernists with whom he shared an interest in aesthetic experimentation (Harding 97). This double bind would continue past the publication of *USA*—a novel which was genuinely lauded by the Left—at the same time that Dos Passos was experiencing a number of personal crises regarding global radicalism, Stalinism, and the increasingly fragmentary nature of the Left in United States. By the time he had officially foresworn leftist politics in favor of supporting anti-Communist policies during the height of the Cold War, Dos Passos’s position within the new canon was tenuous at best. Indeed, at the same time that he threw his support behind conservative policies in Washington, critics in the US “laid claim for the first time to having produced a globally significant, even dominant, literature, pointing to such celebrated (and Nobel Prize-winning) modernists as Eliot, Hemingway, and Faulkner as the most important evidence of this triumph,” and in doing so they consciously produced a canon of explicitly apolitical but formally experimental literature that “functioned as a bulwark to the assertion of the United States’ geopolitical ascendancy in the period after

the Second World War” (Moglen 10).²⁹ While highly regarded among twentieth-century novelists—Jean Paul Sartre was an avowed fan, quite famously pronouncing him “the greatest writer of our time”—Dos Passos was often criticized for his novels’ deliberate narratological difficulty, sheer historical and spatial sprawl, and the consistently Leftist and anticapitalist positions within *Manhattan Transfer* and *USA*, all of which ensured his peripheral place following America’s Second Renaissance during the 1950’s (62; Harding 97).

In spite of both explanations, Dos Passos is a pivotal figure in the landscape of US modernism, and *Manhattan Transfer* stands—on its own—as an interesting and crucial text, not only as an exceptional US novel but also as an international modern urban narrative. Like Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Andrei Bely’s *Petersburg*, Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Brazilian novelist Patrícia Galvão’s *Industrial Park*—the final novel to be considered in this study—Dos Passos’s novel examines the effects of modernity on individuals and populations living in major metropolitan settings within an experimental narrative framework. More specifically, Dos Passos combines a profound critique of the technological and economic systems that form the basis of the modern moment—systems which enable, among other things, urban anxiety, conflict, and labor exploitation—with a Futurist’s celebration of the dynamic and new. He does so in a way that attempts to extend the realist project of a totalizing verisimilitude by breaking

²⁹ It is not my intention to say that the works produced by Eliot, Faulkner, or Hemingway are entirely apolitical. Instead, I agree with Moglen’s assessment of early 20th century canon-making, which he further elaborates thus: “For this literature to have performed this particular cultural work, it needed to be relatively free from explicit suggestions that the emerging economic and political order ought to be resisted—especially from the Left. With hindsight, one can now see the specific ideological utility of equating formal complexity and aesthetic sophistication with political resignation. With the exigencies of the cold war in mind, it is not difficult to perceive why the strand of the modernist tradition that refused such resignation was consigned for decades to obscurity” (10).

the planes of narration and embedding pieces of real life in the text—newspaper headlines, overheard snippets of dialogue, song lyrics, the roar of public transit—an aesthetic maneuver that allows the novel to function like a Cubist painting or collage in an attempt to replicate the ways in which urban spaces are experienced subjectively. Despite the somewhat problematic and indecisive politics of the novel as a whole—Why are the most trenchant political commentaries provided by peripheral immigrant characters employing clichés? How does the author reconcile his critique of naked capitalist industrialization with the exuberant celebration of those industrialized products in the novel?—*Manhattan Transfer* inaugurates a defining moment in US literature, and as such we must necessarily reassess its reputation as merely the novel that preceded *USA*.

Manhattan Transfer's difficulty as a narrative has been noted since its publication, and a somewhat ambivalent review by Southern Agrarian novelist Allen Tate in a volume of *The Nation* from 1926 is paradigmatic of the way some critics originally viewed the novel.³⁰ Tate begins his review by stating, "Since the last years of the eighteenth century, when the writing, publication, and critical reception of books became a process in which these phases of literature were in fixed relations, only those writers most defiant of notice or most isolated by circumstances from competition in society have written as whole men" (160). This statement criticizes the previous century's literature (in conjunction with the business of literature) as awkwardly programmatic, and notes that because of its formulaic conventionality, most writers have sacrificed "fulness [sic] of spirit" for "the

³⁰ As an interesting aside, the bulk of Tate's review is situated across from an advertisement for *The Life of Benito Mussolini* by Margherita G. Sarfatti. According to the ad, the book "sets forth, persuasively, the background and the diverse national elements which combined to bring this brilliant son of Italy to his present astounding eminence, where he possesses power which many a Roman emperor would have envied" (161).

novel [. . .] done up with a mechanically episodic neatness, externally and too obviously a good job” (160). Both Hemingway and Dos Passos stand in stark contrast to Tate’s hypothetical hack writers because they share an “unusual integrity” regarding literature—“a seriousness, a care for good prose in itself”—and while he criticizes Dos Passos for having only “partly measured the current taste” of contemporary literature in *Manhattan Transfer*, his ultimate verdict is that “Mr. Dos Passos has contributed a new point of reference to the American consciousness; henceforth our milieu is altered” (161).³¹ Dos Passos does this by approaching the “spiritual crisis of this period” as an artist, leaving the material unfocused and with a profound lack of “unity of projection . . . controlled simply by the mechanism of time” (161). But, despite the newness and rawness of subjective experience in the novel—he declares “it should have a considerable popularity”—Tate seems hesitant to endorse it completely, observing that “since Mr. Dos Passos has limited his sensibility to the diligent registration of appearance and has not proposed an aesthetic problem, you will find that none is solved” (161). Ultimately for Tate, the novelistic experimentation in *Manhattan Transfer* proves too “inchoate” in its diverse materials and too “contrived” in the apparent randomness of its episodes to merit more serious consideration (161).

³¹ For an in-depth discussion of *Ulysses*’s influences on Dos Passos and *Manhattan Transfer*, see Desmond Harding’s *Writing the City: Urban Visions and Literary Modernism*. Harding examines at length the aesthetic similarities between the two novels, noting that many critics, “while identifying Joyce as a probable influence on Dos Passos’ work, have been somewhat cursory” regarding Dos Passos’s “open acknowledgments of the intellectual debt” he owed Joyce, this attitude taken despite Dos Passos’s comparison between Joyce and “any current dispenser of daydreams,” in which “Joyce is working with speech straight and so dominating the machine of production, while the daydream artist is merely feeding the machine, like a girl in a sausage factory shoving hunks of meat into the hopper” (106, qtd. in Harding 102). He continues, “Whoever can run the machine runs it for all of us. Working with speech straight is vigorous absorbing devastating hopeless work, work that no man need be ashamed of” (qtd. in Harding 102).

Sinclair Lewis, in a much more congenial and laudatory assessment of the novel, boldly states that *Manhattan Transfer* “may be the foundation of a whole new school of novel-writing” and that Dos Passos “may be, more than Dreiser, Cather, Hergesheimer, Cabell, or Anderson the father of humanized and living fiction . . . not merely for America but for the world!” (3). He views the novel “as more important in every way than anything by Gertrude Stein or Marcel Proust or even the great white boar, Mr. Joyce’s ‘Ulysses,’” because Dos Passos “deftly” employs “all their experimental psychology and style, all their revolt against the molds of classic fiction, all their interiority, their complexes of thought” and “is *interesting*” in the process (4). Whereas naturalist novelists and many of the modernists compose “treatises on harmony, very scholarly and confoundedly dull,” Dos Passos’s novel “is the moving symphony itself”; by comparison, *Ulysses* reads like so many “laboratory-reports” (4). Although Lewis sometimes misses the mark in his glowing review of *Manhattan Transfer*—aside from his assertion that Dos Passos is more important than Proust and Joyce, he also claims that Dos Passos “deals not in photography but in broken color (though never, thank Heaven, in Picasso impressionism)”—he arrives at the same basic claim that Tate makes, despite Tate’s ambivalence about *Manhattan Transfer*’s success: the novel is an important one precisely because of its formal narrative innovations and intense urban subjectivity (11). Because there is no real plot in *Manhattan Transfer*—even its main character Jimmy Herf remains peripheral when compared to the city-as-character—we must necessarily focus our attention on the formal attributes of the novel first before making any decisive critical

comment about its success or failures as well as its relevance to this study of city-slum novels.

Dos Passos arranges *Manhattan Transfer* into three main sections which he then breaks down into smaller chapters, and these smaller units bear distinctive titles that reflect different aspects of urban life. Furthermore, a small, italicized vignette opens each chapter, often full of fragmented, impressionistic, and abstracted descriptions of the city. The opening lines of the first chapter, entitled “Ferryslip” read as follows:

Three gulls wheel above the broken boxes, orangerinds, spoiled cabbage heads that heave between the splintered plank walls, the green waves spume under the round bow as the ferry, skidding on the tide, crashes, gulps the broken water, slides, settles slowly into the slip. Handwinches whirl with jingle of chains. Gates unfold upwards, feet step out across the crack, men and women press through the manuresmelling wooden tunnel of the ferryhouse, crushed and jostling like apples fed down a chute into a press. (3)

This vignette is a microcosm of the linguistic novelties and cinematic reportage that Dos Passos uses throughout his novel. His lack of conjunctions, his diction of imperfect English and oddly amalgamated words, and the precise if highly idiosyncratic descriptions he employs all mimic the way in which we perceive the visual, aural, and tactile world of New York. The act of walking down a wooden gangplank does indeed *sound* like a bunch apples tumbling down a chute, but equally as important is the association of violence awaiting both those passengers and the apples when they reach

their respective destinations, a violence he explores extensively. The violent juxtaposition of beautiful wheeling gulls and the smell of manure creates an overwhelming, almost synaesthetic experience for those disembarking from the ferry, and there is an interesting tension here between a pointillist's eye for detail—the “orangerinds,” the “spoiled cabbage head”—and the author's need to reduce a crowd metonymically to so many sets of nondescript feet because of its sheer size and movement.

The success of this particular vignette is that Dos Passos places his audience in a position similar to those of the ferry patrons or new immigrants who have just arrived in the city for the first time, and this has important implications regarding the way in which we approach the novel. Similar to the Marches' travels in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, the means of conveyance to, in, and around the city in *Manhattan Transfer* are both literal class markers and symbols of increasing sophistication and assimilation; like the waves of new immigrants throughout the novel, we, too, are literally fresh off the boat at the beginning of this novel, and this vignette approximates that initial subjective, sensory encounter of the city. The metropolis is so overwhelming that it engages all of the senses simultaneously and arrests one's ability to translate it or make sense of it. Normal language ceases to function adequately, hence the amalgams like “handwinches” and “manuresmelling,” and in an attempt to experience these impressions accurately, the viewer must necessarily lean towards subjectivity and abstraction. In providing this intensely idiosyncratic, “synoptic view of the city,” which Blanche Gelfant defines as “embracing its [the city's] variety and complexity,” Dos Passos's brand of realism

“consists in striking essential details abstracted from their total context” and carefully choosing “a few evocative details that are to suggest the essential quality of the whole” (142). A useful comparison to help understand this trend towards totalizing (realist) subjectivity may be drawn between this vignette and the first two stanzas of “The Harbor Dawn” in Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*, which also speaks to the difficulty of encapsulating this initial immersion into urban experience in verse,³² and, of course, this is the central technique of modernist poets like Pound and Eliot. It can be stated accurately that Dos Passos is engaged in a project similar to the central consciousness of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, who quite famously states “These fragments I have shored against my ruins” at the conclusion of the poem (46).

Man’s role in Dos Passos’s New York is rather elliptical: while men and women certainly participate in its development, the sheer size of the city makes it difficult to single out any one character and follow his or her fortunes as one does with characters in the fiction of Howells, Dreiser, or Crane. In this sense *Manhattan Transfer* as a whole appears strongly anti-Romantic. Dos Passos’s description of an newborn baby squirming “in the cottonwool feebly like a knot of worms” that ends the first paragraph is a clear indication that this narrative has no Romantic or sentimental protagonist (3). Instead, the

³² The lines I refer to are as follows:
 Insistently through sleep—a tide of voices—
 They meet you listening midway in your dream,
 The long, tired sounds, fog-insulated noises;
 Gongs in white surplices, beshrouded wails,
 Far strum of fog horns . . . signals dispersed in veils.

And then a truck will lumber past the wharves
 As winch engines begin throbbing on some deck;
 Or a drunken stevedore’s howl and thud below
 Comes echoing alley-upward through dim snow. (11)

city grows, changes, and takes what it will of its inhabitants. Whereas Azevedo describes João Romão's capitalist machine as effective if rudimentary in *The Slum*, Dos Passos depicts a dynamic, efficient, and well-oiled one in this text, a machine that has no use for individuals like Bud Korpenning, a farm boy escaping the violent conditions of an upstate farm in the hopes of finding work in the big city. Penniless, hungry, and paranoid, Bud finds himself consistently walking on the other side of Broadway and New York—a Broadway of “empty lots where tin cans glittered among grass and sumach bushes and ragweed, between ranks of billboards and Bull Durham signs, past shanties and abandoned squatters' shacks, past gulches heaped with wheelscarred rubbishpiles where dumpcarts were dumping ashes and clinkers,” all of this instead of the glamorous lights of “the Gay White Way” and the wealthy people he originally imagined as background to his quest (23, 78). Finding no work he deems worthy of a white man and feeling more persecuted by “detectives . . . in derbyhats” (detectives who may or may not be real) after spending a few lonely nights in the Bowery, he eventually makes his way to the Brooklyn Bridge and falls off, breaking his neck upon impact (123). Although it is not clear if this is an accident—Dos Passos writes, “The windows of Manhattan have caught fire. He jerks himself forward, slips, dangles by a hand with the sun in his eyes. The yell strangles in his throat as he drops”—what is clear is that the city wastes little time in crushing the useless, uprooted individual into a sodden, “long black limp thing” pulled up dead from the river (125, 126). As is readily apparent in the vignette preceding the chapter entitled “Dollars,” there are tens of thousands ready to replace the Buds of New York annually, people so desperate that they even endure the awful conditions of

quarantine ships drifting on the Hudson River, all because the United States is the land of a “million dollars” and “opportoonity” (49).

Over the course of the two decades or so that *Manhattan Transfer* documents, the exponential growth of the city becomes the real subject of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, the city is represented by gas lights, “the annihilating clatter of the L trains overhead,” and “the rancid sweet huddled smell of packed tenements”—the New York variously described by Howells in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, by Crane in *Maggie*, and, to a lesser extent, the Gotham of Wharton’s aristocratic novels (10). But, already set into motion are the industrial wheels of progress; unlike the brick that supported “Babylon and Nineveh,” the “gold marble columns” of Athens, Rome’s “broad arches of rubble,” or Constantinople’s flaming minarets, the new Metropolis and its skyscrapers will be composed of steel, glass, tile, and concrete (12). In the vignette that opens the second chapter, “Metropolis,” Dos Passos describes the newest of the world’s historical and cultural epicenters: “Crammed on the narrow island the millionwindowed buildings will jut glittering, pyramid on pyramid like the white cloudhead above a thunderstorm” (12). Below the vignette is a headline from the *Journal* that reads “MORTON SIGNS THE GREATER NEW YORK BILL,” the signing of which “COMPLETES THE ACT MAKING NEW YORK WORLD’S SECOND METROPOLIS” (12). It is, however, a metropolis plagued by an arsonist, whose handiwork in burning immigrant tenement houses always attracts a crowd, as well as a metropolis that extreme nativists criticize as a city teeming with “dirty kikes and shanty Irish”; Jimmy Herf’s Uncle Jeff declares that the Catholics and Jews who inhabit parts of the West Side as well as the Lower East Side

“are going to run us out of our own country” (102, 101). But this New York is also a city in which realtors claim that “mechanical inventions—telephones, electricity, steel bridges, horseless vehicles”—will eventually lead to “the Borough of Queens,” constituting “as much the heart and throbbing center of the great metropolis as is Astor Place today” (15). Furthermore, this is the metropolis that most resembles that of New York today, in which the Danish architect Specker designs novel “communal buildings,” breathlessly described as “seventyfive stories high stepped back terraces with a sort of hanging garden on every floor, hotels, theaters, Turkish baths, swimming pools, department stores, heating plant, refrigerating and market space all in the same building” (170). (This architect was in his right mind the entire time—when someone asks if he ate “coke,” another man responds, “No siree he didnt” [170].) As Ed Thatcher tells his young daughter, the generation occupying this New York is the generation that needs “con-struction and not de-struction in this world” (18).

The ‘con-struction’ of the second metropolis is a recurring motif throughout the novel’s almost cyclical development, and Dos Passos views these developments through a distinctly Futurist lens.³³ Much earlier than his creation of the communal building, Specker makes plans “for allsteel buildins,” over which two men have an inspired discussion (75). Dos Passos writes,

He’s got an idea the skyscraper of the future’ll be built of steel and glass.

We’ve been experimenting with vitrous tile recently. . . . cristamighty

some of his plans would knock yer eye out. . . .He’s got a great sayin

³³ I generally refer to Italian Futurism and its practitioners’ love of dynamism, energy, technology, and newness, and specifically to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s ideas regarding these issues from a revolutionary and literary standpoint.

about some Roman emperor who found Rome of brick and left it of marble. Well he says he's found New York of brick and that he's goin to leave it of steel . . . steel and glass. I'll have to show you his project for a rebuilt city. It's some pipedream. (75)

As becomes readily clear, however, the city *does* realize Specker's dreams for his steel-and-glass wonder city. Construction and traffic noise become unbearable as one site springs up after another, and Dos Passos tries to capture the dynamic noise and images of production when he writes, "Across Park Avenue the flameblue sky was barred with the red girder cage of a new building. Steam riveters rattled incessantly; now and then a donkeyengine whistled and there was a jingle of chains and a fresh girder soared crosswise in the air. Men in blue overalls moved about the scaffolding" (185). Despite the grit, clamor, and danger of these sites, there is an obvious celebration of dynamism and industry in this description—clearly anticipating Lewis Hine's series of photographs documenting the construction of the Empire State building from 1930-1931—and in many ways these two passages speak directly to F. T. Marinetti's desire to bring Futurism into literature. Like the Futurist architect and painter, the Futurist writer should "dread . . . quiet living," have a profound "loathing of curved lines, spirals, and the *tourniquet*," and express "love for the straight line and the tunnel" (96, 97). Popping up at regular intervals on Manhattan's gridiron street plan, the angular skyscraper is one of the Futurist's dream—bold, metallic, glossy, and powerful. Perhaps the most simple but boldest articulation of the novel's Futurist tendencies is Jimmy Herf's friend Stan drunkenly muttering to himself, "Kerist I wish I was a skyscraper" (252).

The novel seems to suggest, too, that as soon as one architectural or industrial venture is completed, individuals will grow dissatisfied with it and try to improve upon it, and that the city thrives on the constant flux of construction and destruction, replacing the old with the new on a daily basis. As a dissatisfied old “cockney” sailor proclaims, “This aren’t any plyce for an old man, it’s for the young and strong, this is,” a statement that easily applies to the architecture and the elevated/subway (63). Despite the new skyscrapers’ colossal, collective majesty, some characters find their sterile, steel, monochromatic facades depressing, even more so than the old buildings that were demolished to make room for the new. “Imagine this city when all the buildins instead of bein dirty gray were ornamented with vivid colors,” the businessman Sandbourne says:

Imagine bands of scarlet round the entablatures of skyscrapers. Colored tile would revolutionize the whole life of the city. . . . Instead of fallin back on the orders or on gothic or romanesque decorations we could evolve new designs, new colors, new forms. If there was a little color in the town all this hardshell inhibited life’d break down. . . . There’d be more love an less divorce. (257)

Unlike this suggestion, which is immediately dismissed as the ramblings of an old romantic, there can be no argument that the subway revolutionized the life of the city. As discussed in the Howells chapter, whatever initial enthusiasm there was for the elevated would soon be redirected toward the sheer practicality and utility of the subway, a fact clearly reflected in the novel. “Morning clatters with the first L train down Allen Street,” Dos Passos writes, “Daylight rattles through the windows, shaking the old brick houses,

splatters the girders of the L structure with bright confetti” (129). The roar of the elevated interferes with conversation; in a brilliant passage of pure synaesthesia, Dos Passos describes the elevated’s noise as “jagged oblongs of harsh sound” breaking “one after another” on a person’s head as it rushes above him (158). While the elevated never truly disappears from the text, Dos Passos gradually reduces its prominence over the course of the narrative in favor of louder street traffic and the subway, and with the increased speed of the subterranean conveyance, Dos Passos alters the way in which he describes the view from inside, becoming more cinematic in the process: “Faces, hats, hands, newspaper jiggled in the fetid roaring subway car like corn in a popper. The down-town express passed clattering in yellow light, window telescoping window till they overlapped like scales” (256). Yet, after the novelty wears off the subway, even it appears plebian; Sandbourne jokes with a colleague on the subway that “it does you plutocrats good now and then to see how the other half travels. . . . Maybe it’ll make you induce some of your little playmates down at Tammany Hall to stop squabbling and give us wageslaves a little transportation” (256).

For those that can afford it, this modern New York provides all the luxury money can buy. In a small scene involving a couple by the name of Olafson and a real estate agent, luxury housing is a topic of debate. Mrs. Olafson demands that they “must live up to our income” rather than living within their means, and this entails renting an expensive apartment on Riverside Drive (41). In a rather revealing exchange between the three, when asked about their present address Mrs. Olafson claims that their present address is the Hotel Astor and that their belongings are in storage. Later her husband confronts her

about the lie, and she tells him, “I couldn’t tell him we lived in the Bronx could I? He’d have thought we were Jews and wouldn’t have rented us the apartment” (42). After World War I, the duration of which occurs between section two and three, the exact opposite is true—because of overdevelopment, those that can live in New York but away from Manhattan choose to do so, relocating to the areas made famous by the Jazz Age novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

The Fitzgerald set of characters in the novel like to dance, drink, and pursue the seamier activities associated with New York in the teens and twenties, and for the most part they espouse no real politics or regard for the less fortunate, desiring only to live life to its booziest. In sharp contrast, however, the Frenchman and ex-sailor-turned-bootlegger Congo Jake functions as a mouthpiece through which Dos Passos disseminates the majority of *Manhattan Transfer*’s most outspoken political views. Congo chooses to stay in the US and become a citizen because “a man has the right to choose his country” (20). He views Europe as “rotten and stinking,” and it is only in America that “a fellow can get ahead”; here, “birth don’t matter, education don’t matter”—the only thing that does is “coin” (21). In the course of his journey up twin economic and social ladders, he meets an Italian anarchist named Marco who virulently attacks the racism inherent in Anglo-Saxon New York, decrying the fact that “It’s the same all over the world, the police beating us up” and “rich people cheating us out of their starvation wages” (37). At the commencement of World War I, Congo flatly refuses to fight—even if it means he “can’t be an American citizen”—because he sees underneath the European conflict economic and industrial alliances between nation-states, politicians, and

industrialists. He sees men like “Guillaume and Viviani and l’Empereur d’Autriche and Krupp and Rothschild and Morgan” as a collective who set out to make an international war so that “workingmen all over wont make big revolution,” and he perceives the assassination of Jaures—the French social democrat and pacifist who organized massive labor strikes in Germany and France to force peaceful negotiations prior to France’s mobilization—as indicative of the way in which the European aristocrats and plutocrats treat the working poor (227). He does eventually join, though, and he loses a leg in Italy; when he gets back to the States, he decides to become entirely American, turning capitalist by joining the bootlegging trade. He runs a swift business in pre-war liquor until an impromptu raid by the competition ends in violence, after which the police arrest him and he spends time in jail for conspiracy.

But how committed is the political critique in *Manhattan Transfer*? While the anti-capitalist strain is apparent on almost every page within the novel, I find it troubling that only the most peripheral characters articulate any overt political declarations. Dos Passos unabashedly describes the pinnacles of urban achievement—skyscrapers—but rarely examines the people who build them, an issue that would be taken up in the 1930s in Pietro di Donato’s *Christ in Concrete*. The lower-class characters in *Manhattan Transfer* appear faceless for the most part, especially the foreign born; despite its sheer size by this time, the immigrant class mostly remains in the background. More problematic is the fact that Congo actively participates in feeding the wealthy of New York—jokingly throwing out clichéd Marxist lines while spooning them booze—at the same time that he so roundly denounces Europe for its decadence and class antagonisms.

Marco disappears from the text entirely after formulating his radical anarchistic platform. While capitalism is described as “a wampire that sucks your blood . . . day . . . and . . . night” by a labor leader, this occurs in a vignette, set off from the main text of the novel (255). Especially when compared to Patrícia Galvão’s strongly Marxist-feminist novel *Industrial Park*, it seems that, despite his personal affiliations with the Left, Dos Passos subordinates his most militant political material to the aesthetic project of presenting the subjective experience of the city. In this sense, I agree with Granville Hicks’s assessment that although the novel is not “calculated to inculcate respect for the qualities that bring success under capitalism,” there is still “not much politics in *Manhattan Transfer*” because “the book is directed against a way of life, not a political or economic system” (20).

Jimmy Herf mouths the same (a)political rhetoric, ineffectively arguing for proletarian revolution over cocktails, and in doing so, he fulfills his role as a perpetually liminal character within the narrative. Despite this liminality, if there is a narrative presence as important as the city within Dos Passos’s novel, it would most certainly be that of Jimmy, a character who could easily have come out of Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, another important New York novel published in 1925. Jimmy arrives on a boat from Europe as a child, landing on the Fourth of July; he and his parents have lived in Europe for four years, but he was born in New York and will deprecatingly identify himself as a native New Yorker as an adult. Like the opening vignette I discussed earlier, the occasion of docking in New York for the first time is an overwhelming one, especially for a child, and Dos Passos does his best to capture the sensory overload that

Jimmy experiences. Visual images collide with snippets of songs performed by a patriotic brass band, overheard dialogue, and announcements for those about to leave the ship, and this heteroglossia-like cacophony culminates in the explosions of cannons lit to celebrate the holiday. While all of this occurs around him, Jimmy finds it funny that “after you’ve left the ship you can still feel the motion” (70-71). With his parents acting as guides, Jimmy then witnesses the metropolis from the backseat of a cab, seeing its “funny little train with a green engine” that his parents call an Elevated, viewing the impressive Flatiron Building, and finally arriving at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. After an undisclosed amount of time, his mother becomes sick and dies, he moves in with other family (who keep an eye on him and his inheritance), and he eventually grows up and becomes a journalist, most of which character trajectory is omitted from the narrative.

It is precisely because of his chosen occupation that Jimmy, whom many scholars identify as a thinly veiled, semi-autobiographical character, occupies a liminal position between the nouveau riche like the Olafsons and the immigrants and working poor who appear en masse throughout the novel. Like his literary predecessor Basil March, Jimmy’s work as a journalist allows him immediate access to other parts of the city that his circle normally do not visit, and one result of this access is that he has a radically different perspective on New York than do his friends; in essence, he hates it.³⁴ In one of their many modern, witty conversations, Stan mentions Herf’s liberal education at Columbia in passing, and Jimmy bitterly retorts, “I wish it’d been real Colombia,” the Colombia of “Bogota and the Orinoco and all that sort of thing” (174). He claims he

³⁴ Another parallel, interestingly enough, is that he maintains the sort of passiveness that Basil displays in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* regarding his observations of otherness; at one point he states, “You get so you dont have any private life, you’re just an automatic writing machine” in relation to his work (344).

would even risk “elephantiasis and bubonic plague and spotted fever to get out of this hole,” and then he asks Stan, “Do you realize that I’ve lived all my life in this goddam town except four years when I was little and that I’m likely to die here?” (174). Stan good-humoredly calls him “the only sensible person in this town” because of his lack of ambition, but Jimmy still resents the city, claiming that he’s “losing all the best part of my life rotting in New York” (175, 177).

The problem regarding Jimmy’s desire to see the world—a problem left unresolved by the Dos Passos at the end of the novel—is best summed up by George, an acquaintance of Jimmy. When asked why he does not pursue a career in politics, George states, “Why should I go up to Washington into that greasy backwater when I’m right on the spot where they give the orders? The terrible thing about having New York go stale on you is that there’s nowhere else. It’s the top of the world. All we can do is go round and round in a squirrel cage” (220). This is the quandary facing Jimmy. However, Dos Passos immediately rejects any return to the pastoral as sentimental and impossible. Early in the novel, a laborer named Gus, “full up to the neck wid” his job, decides to move with his wife “out West” to “take up free land in North Dakota or somewhere an raise wheat” (46). According to his assessment, “This here livin in the city’s no good,” and it “aint no loife for her nor me neyther,” but the fact that an Irishman used to living in the city makes this decision seems imprudent and ill-advised, to say the least (46). As one character attests, “this city is full of people wanting inconceivable things,” especially the chance to leave it (262). When Jimmy finally does leave it, after quitting his job and walking around New York on a long, almost psychedelic bender, he happily waits for a

ferry with “no future but the foggy river” ahead of him, drawing on the potentially emancipatory, riverine tradition in US fiction dating back to Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (403). But what emerges from the fog is a rather ominous-looking ferry, so he decides to walk instead, taking to America’s highway, littered with garbage and nearly overrun with brush. At a diner he asks a truck driver if he can get a lift, and when the driver asks him, “How fur ye goin?” Jimmy replies, “I dunno. . . . Pretty far” (404). The novel thus ends on an ambiguous note, suggesting that once Jimmy leaves the confines of the city, he no longer has any narrative relevance, and in suggesting this Dos Passos inverts the classic dialectic between country and city—the city, finally, is where it’s at. Despite his critical position regarding the exploitive, destructive lifestyle enabled by the metropolis, Dos Passos appears to prefer its pace, its rawness, its newness. In fact, taking to the road, ultimately, will only bring Jimmy to another city, if not ultimately bringing him back to the second metropolis, a trajectory inherent in his inability to imagine a non-urban destination more specific than ‘pretty far.’ Whatever his destination, the real city will live on without him, reminding us once again, as it did Basil’s Isabel, that it lives on but without a heart.

Patrícia Galvão adopts this tact as well in *Industrial Park*, a novel set in an industrial district in São Paulo around 1930. When characters leave the working classes or the textile district in her novel, they no longer have a place in the narrative and have very little narrative presence apart from that of absence. But the parallels between Galvão’s novel and *Manhattan Transfer* do not end there. Both novelists highlight questions of class and labor in their works, and they also deal explicitly with the role of

immigrants in the social, economic, political landscapes of their metropolises. However, in *Industrial Park* Galvão reconciles the fragmentary nature of the modern narrative with radical politics in a way that Dos Passos seems unwilling or unable to do, as she composes her novel from an openly Marxist perspective and allows some of her recurring characters to espouse some of the radical Communist and feminist beliefs that she herself held at the time of composition. While her novel sometimes lapses toward a naïve, programmatic view of Communism, which Galvão would eventually denounce, there is nevertheless a profound political engagement at the core of *Industrial Park* that *Manhattan Transfer* lacks, which I take up in earnest in the next chapter.

Chapter V

Braz, City Within a City: Labor, Gender, and Modernity in Patrícia Galvão's *Industrial Park*

One understands without being told that here is a metropolis.

—Rudyard Kipling, upon viewing São Paulo for the first time³⁵

We are no longer the classic tropical country with its laziness and dreams, [because] today we work in São Paulo with the fever of the Yankees.

—May 1925, from the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *O Jornal*³⁶

Early twentieth-century industrialization and the often unchecked growth following in its wake has left an indelible imprint on São Paulo, a city that some people, including many *paulista*³⁷ graffiti artists, now affectionately deem “one of the ugliest cities in the world” (Manco et al. 28). In 1900, prior to the twin booms in textiles and metalworking, many of the districts that would house those industries were little more than “swampy lowlands with . . . few inhabitants,” but the success of São Paulo’s coffee economy soon gave many wealthy stockholders and coffee barons the opportunity to diversify their assets and to invest their earnings in urban and suburban industries (Wolfe 6). Like Rio, São Paulo also experienced a rapid influx of European immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century, and many Italian and Eastern European women soon found themselves working at the looms of Braz (also spelled Brás), Mooca, Belemzinho, and Cambuci, all fairly new districts in the city. Indeed, the potential for a decent paying, semi-skilled job attracted so many laborers to São Paulo that the city’s population

³⁵ From *Brazilian Sketches*. New York: Doubleday, 1940, page 66.

³⁶ Quoted in Wolfe 41, from *Working Women, Working Men: São Paulo and the Rise of Brazil’s Industrial Working Class, 1900-1955*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.

³⁷ Native residents of São Paulo.

doubled “every fifteen years from the turn of the century,” and, in fact, the immigrant population outnumbered native Brazilians two to one (Jackson, Afterword 115).

Despite industry’s initial success in the city, volatility marked the economic, political, and social climates in São Paulo during the period from 1890-1933. Urban planning executed to facilitate the growing leisure class’s access to housing and upscale shopping also forced laborers—including many immigrants—to move into *cortiços* within the factory districts themselves, effectively shunting the working poor into dismal, diseased living conditions away from the rest of the city (Wolfe 9). This segregation would soon prove explosive, however, because the European laborers brought with them an acute sense of their rights as workers, having escaped labor exploitation in their native lands. By the early 1920s, labor issues were the cause of widespread violent clashes with the police and military, and any sympathy or solidarity with various unions or communist, socialist, and anarchist movements in Brazil were grounds for beatings, blacklisting, and deportation; indeed, many leading industrialists were quite willing to provide “lists of foreign-born activists to be deported under the provisions” of a law originally drafted in 1907 (26). Women were often at the forefront of in-shop protests, effectively striking for better wages and working conditions, fewer hours, and an end to rampant sexual abuse at the hands of male foremen and workers, and some industrialists, in an attempt to adopt Fordist principles in São Paulo, went so far as to offer to their employees “discounted meals at factory restaurants, foodstuffs below market prices, limited medical care, reading classes, and recreation facilities,” as well as building and maintaining small houses known as *vilas operárias* with rents “one quarter of the market rate for similar

dwelling” (45). But, when localized strikes grew in size, the original demands by female laborers were often co-opted and later dropped from the list of demands made by male strike organizers, who took more philosophical or revolutionary approaches to organized resistance than their pragmatic female counterparts. Inspired by global labor movements, the larger strikes were often the ones that led to the most vicious backlashes, and as they became more prevalent, several industrialists overturned their initial concessions and grew increasingly hostile to any discussion of labor rights. Ultimately, it proved far easier to fire union members and committed affiliates of the Left and to replace those workers than to cooperate with São Paulo’s labor movement, and with the establishment of authoritarian Getúlio Vargas’s government in 1930, the Left grew increasingly disintegrated and disenfranchised, especially given Vargas’s willingness to use arrests, tortures, and trials by kangaroo court in his relationships with the opposition (Skidmore 170).

Patrícia Galvão captures this complex nexus of gender, economics, and politics in her experimental 1933 novel *Parque Industrial, um romance proletario (Industrial Park, A Proletarian Novel)*. An avowed Communist when the novel was published, Galvão would remain a committed and engaged member of the Left despite her eventual imprisonment³⁸ and torture under the Vargas regime lasting from 1935 to 1940 and her excommunication from Brazil’s Communist party in 1940 for “individualistic and sensationalist agitation” (Jackson, Afterword 120), and, in actuality, the Party played a

³⁸ This was not Galvão’s first arrest for revolutionary activity. According to Susan K. Besse, “In August 1931, she became the first woman political prisoner in Brazil, held for a short time for being an ‘agitator’ in a demonstration that became violent” (173). The demonstration consisted mainly of dockworkers striking “in homage to Sacco and Vanzetti” (Bloch 193).

key role in her imprisonment and torture, having contributed “a deposition to her prosecution by the fascist Estado Novo,” a deposition that helped to indict her (Unruh 198). Equally as important as her revolutionary activities is her early embodiment of a modern, avant-garde sensibility. Born into a middle-class family in 1910 and educated in Braz, Galvão soon became embittered with the staunchly Catholic, conservative, and largely patriarchal climate in which she was raised. At the age of seventeen, she befriended a number of avant-garde artists in São Paulo, earned the moniker ‘Pagu’ from a poet friend, and became the muse for writers and painters in her circle; journalist Alvaro Moreyra was so impressed with her attitude and approach to life that he wrote, “Pagu abolished the grammar of life” (qtd. in Besse 171). Using her (at times) bizarre fashionista appearance, her body, and the thoroughly modernist literature³⁹ she produced (in the form of explicitly sexual poetry, two novels, and short pieces she wrote for a number of experimental journals), she tried her best to do just that.

Like Azevedo, Galvão roots her broader critique of Brazilian politics and society in a localized urban space, the factory district of Braz, but her treatment of the city novel represents a profound shift in politics, focus, and process from Azevedo’s naturalist work.

In fact, superficially it functions much more like Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer* in its

³⁹ Vicky Unruh discusses the general trends of literary historiographers to differentiate between Hispanic American *modernismo* and Brazilian *modernismo*. Brazilian *modernismo* is “a twentieth-century vanguard literary movement originating in the early 1920s and corresponding in its first decade to Spanish American *vanguardias* or avant-gardes,” while Spanish American *modernismo*, which is not discussed in this study, is the “late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movement that preceded and is distinct from the vanguards” (242). A key moment in Brazilian modernism was the *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Week) that occurred in March 1922 in São Paulo, and the key philosophical manifesto associated with Brazilian *modernismo* is Oswald de Andrade’s 1928 “Manifesto Antropófago” (“Cannibal Manifesto”), which called for Brazilian artists of every stripe to “consume and recycle colonizing European culture,” drawing on a distinctly Brazilian primitivism and indigenous history to foment an aesthetic revolution (195). The most famous statement from this manifesto, written in English in the original Portuguese document, is the phrase “Tupi or not tupi, that is the question,” referring to the generic name for all indigenous peoples in Brazil (de Andrade 38).

wedding of anticapitalist critique and experimental narrative aesthetics, but even that particular comparison fails to appreciate perhaps the most important element in *Industrial Park*: gender critique. Galvão's proletarian novel adds an additional layer of gender criticism to her already trenchant view of São Paulo and the State's repressive attitude towards (gendered) labor, and here her critique of exploitative capitalism and patriarchal misogyny seems more genuine and inspired than the somewhat half-hearted and ambiguous politics underlying Dos Passos's novel. Moreover, of all the writers in this particular study, Galvão best represents the difficulties of slum life and exploitation precisely because of her position vis-à-vis the slum. Her unique perspective as a former resident of Braz provides her additional insights into the growth of Braz as an important industrial district *and* slum space—"the immense proletarian city" within a metropolis—and this position allows her to represent sympathetically the collective consciousness of the lumpenproletariat in a way that respects their inherent humanity despite the fragmentary, cinematic style of her prose and the ideological orientation (rather than a psychological one) of her project—an orientation based on developing the ideological core of her novel rather than utilizing characters with complex psychological makeups (Galvão 16). Although the prophetic revolutionary spirit of the novel—predicated upon the global proletarian uprising called for by Marx and others—would soon prove illusory under Vargas's dictatorship, the novel's modern aesthetics and early condemnation of misogynistic labor practices clearly bolsters her importance not only as a Brazilian modernist and an early feminist but also as a revolutionary figure well ahead of her time in a global context.

Galvão structures *Industrial Park* around sixteen short chapters (though K. David Jackson states that they are “better characterized as dramatic scenes or vignettes”), and within each chapter she provides abbreviated glimpses of those associated with Braz, the labor movement, and São Paulo’s decadent bourgeoisie (Afterword 130). These even smaller vignettes range in size and scale—from fully developed dialogues to single sentences—and encompass a wide variety of material, from snippets of overheard conversation and revolutionary speeches to interactions between upper and lower classes and the highly cinematic, montage-like descriptions of a suppressed labor strike comparable to “The Odessa Steps” sequence in Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).⁴⁰ While there is no traditional narrative to speak of in the novel, *Industrial Park* does paint a powerful “social mural” of Braz and São Paulo around 1930, introducing more than fifty different named and anonymous characters in nearly 125 separate, self-contained “interiors” throughout its pages (Afterword 130). Although some of these characters are important to the general arch of the novel—most notably Otavia, Rosinha

⁴⁰ The structural parallels between *Industrial Park* and *Battleship Potemkin* are striking. Both lack a highly individualized central character and conventional (especially linear) plots. Also, apart from the tightly controlled strike sequences in the film and the novel, the similar ideological orientations affect the presentation of each work to the extent that they are both built around ‘chapters’ with thematic, even propagandistic titles: “Men and Maggots,” “Drama on the Quarterdeck,” “An Appeal to the Dead,” “The Odessa Steps,” and “Meeting the Squadron” in *Potemkin*, and titles like “In a Sector of the Class Struggle,” “Public Instruction,” “Racial Opiate” (a chapter about Carnival in the slum), “Where Surplus Value is Spent,” “A Bourgeois Vacillates,” “Where They Talk About Rosa Luxemburg,” and “Proletarianization” in *Industrial Park*. The “leading” chapter titles in Galvão’s novel, meant “to keep the reader’s attention moving in appropriate channels as (s)he moves from one to another of the segments of the fictional collage,” serve an almost identical ideological purpose to those in Eisenstein’s film (Daniel 112). Eisenstein uses the titles to propel the underlying narrative forward—the titles are meant to fill in the spatial and chronological gaps in the narrative—but at the same time, the juxtapositions between title and images are meant to produce profound and instructive shock for his viewers (especially in the “Men and Maggots” segment). Eisenstein’s use of leading titles and juxtaposition was probably more effective in its instruction than Galvão’s, however, because *Industrial Park* was largely inaccessible to the class it was meant to teach. According to K. David Jackson, “Read neither by the female workers it portrayed, who could not read, nor by the Party, which rejected it because of its implicit anarchism, the novel circulated only among the modernists” (Afterword 126).

Lituana, and Eleonora and Alfredo Rocha—their fortunes as a whole may be read “both synchronically and diachronically,” either as “independent fragments” or as an “accumulation of scenes” that “produces a line of social and political development within a Marxist critique of industrial development” (Jackson, “Social Realism” 95). Read and interpreted either way, Galvão’s critique of industry, the State, and misogyny is the most important feature of the novel, so important that she sometimes subordinates her formal narrative experimentation in favor of the novel’s ideological message.

From the title page forward, readers cannot help noticing that *Industrial Park* is a highly politicized, manicaeistic novel. The striking black and white palette of the title page, with its jagged image of a telephone pole and a factory building clashing with graffiti-like words, sets the tone for the polemical “Marxist dichotomy of the good proletariat and the evil middle class” in a propaganda poster style (Daniel 102). The pseudonym “Mara Lobo” is also telling because it is the name the Communist Party forced Galvão to publish under to distant themselves from the more anarchistic, revolutionary elements of the work; in order to keep her under party guidelines, they also forced her “to sign a contract relinquishing any link between the ideas of the novel and those of the party” after its publication (Marshall 284). The subsequent two pages then set up an even bolder *discursive* opposition, this time between a lengthy quote from Aristides do Amaral’s ‘Industrial Statistics of the State of São Paulo’ for 1930 and a statement from Galvão herself, printed entirely in capitalized letters, that reads as follows:

THE STATISTICS AND THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN
STRATUM THAT SUSTAINS THE INDUSTRIAL PARK
OF SÃO PAULO & SPEAKS THE LANGUAGE OF THIS
BOOK, CAN BE FOUND, UNDER THE CAPITALIST RE-

GIME, IN THE JAILS AND IN THE SLUM HOUSES, IN
THE HOSPITALS & IN THE MORGUES. (Galvão 5)

The official discourse, an objective history of numbers delivered by a “disembodied voice of capital,” stands in stark contrast to the real stories of industrialization and urbanization as lived, subjective histories, and clearly Galvão sides with the population that embodies and “sustains” those statistics (Bryan no page). The enemy, a powerful coalition of capitalists, suppresses a largely anonymous population by designating and using the sites of hegemonic oppressive control (jails, *cortiços*, hospitals, morgues), but Galvão sees in her novel a way to collect the disparate, authentic voices of the exploited in a way that both represents their everyday conditions and crafts those voices into a narrative, thereby directly challenging the machinations of power by using print technology against the bourgeoisie.

Galvão employs the same dichotomy at the beginning of the first chapter “Looms,” offering an official street map of “the world of the novel” that charts a route starting from the richest setting in her narrative—the “elite Esplanada Hotel”—through a petit bourgeois commercial district and into the heart of the novel—the factory district of Braz (Galvão 7). Galvão situates the explication of the map on the same page as the first fictional text; in it, after reading a sign on a trolley stating “*São Paulo is the greatest industrial center of South America*,” an Italian girl “throws an early morning ‘banana’ [an obscene gesture] at the trolley,” yelling “Don’t believe it! Braz is the greatest!” (7). In doing so, Galvão notes that the anonymous laborer “defends the country” both from the “imperialist crown” of propaganda on the trolley as well as from those unwilling to acknowledge the laborer’s central position in the city (7). In spite of her anonymity, this

Italian girl speaks for the whole of Braz when she condemns the city's official—and, therefore, hypocritical—position regarding the sites of production and wealth, volubly correcting São Paulo's misinformation at the same time that she openly defies the city with her obscene “banana” (made by “bending one arm and crossing it with the other” [Jackson and Jackson xi]).

Galvão extends the fierce competition between literate, authenticated, and officially sanctioned discourse—the map, the proud slogan on the bus—with the largely anonymous, semi-literate, and truly *authentic* discourse of the margins throughout the course of the novel. In one scene, a maternity nurse wryly notes that “Almost all the indigents have no surname,” while in another, two wealthy women discuss the recently successful women's suffrage movement and note that women workers, because they are illiterate, are “Excluded by nature” (Galvão 56, 70). The debate even extends to popular culture—one particular samba includes the lyrics of social struggle “All Hail!/All Hail!/This samba's/Going to land in jail,” and at one point after Rosinha's deportation, Otavia thinks to herself, “Any militant understands and studies economic questions with the same facility that a bourgeois leafs through a stupid issue of *Femina*,” a popular, conventional women's magazine at the time (90-91, 98). However, the most interesting sites where discourse comes to the fore are in the eruptions of graffiti in the bathroom stalls of a factory and on bar tables. “Because it is written on walls, because it is frequently anonymous, because its spelling is habitually faulty, and because of the kind of message it transmits,” graffiti by its very nature acts as a potent counter-discourse to the official, widespread “hegemony of writing” (Rama 37). When two girls visit the

latrine to talk in the first chapter, one girl reads the walls, which “record the laborer’s complaints. Each corner is a tabloid of insults against the bosses, managers, foremen, and comrades who sold out. There are ugly names, cartoons, social teachings, fingerprints” (Galvão 10). A previous writer wrote the word “fascism” on the wall, which one girl does not understand. The other explains that “It’s that Mussolini thing,” and they debate whether or not it exists in Brazil (10).⁴¹ Inscribing criticism against the establishment in one of the most private areas—the women’s bathroom—allows the writer to use propriety as a shield against the potential repercussions of denouncing the mill-owners as cruel or the state as fascist because male foremen and owners cannot enter or use female latrines. Furthermore, the heteroglossia on the wall, as is the case with the novel itself, is a permanent collection of voices that details as much “dirty” poetry as it does nascent political awareness (10). Finally, the physical signatures left by those anonymous persons who visit the stalls—in this case, their very fingerprints—represent a liminal, middle space between total anonymity and brazen, autographed defiance. The continual presence of uncensored graffiti marks the stall as a democratic haven for all types of intellectual and political congress—ranging from the immaturely sexual to the national (and even the global)—within the place of their oppression, the factory. In the novel’s revolutionary politics, even a bathroom break—despite the fact the girls can only

⁴¹ A proto-fascist party did in fact exist in Brazil prior to World War II. Created by a minor literary figure named Plínio Salgado in 1932 and subscribing to a platform called Integralism, this party “claimed a rapidly growing membership throughout Brazil by 1935. Their dogma was Christian, nationalist, and traditionalist. Their style was paramilitary: uniformed ranks, highly disciplined street demonstrations, colorful green shirts, and aggressive rhetoric. They were essentially middle class and drew support from military officers, especially in the navy. Unknown to the public, the Integralist’s ambitious activities were financed in part by the Italian embassy” (Skidmore and Smith 169). The party would last unofficially until 1937, when Vargas started his aggressive *Estado Novo* policies and stopped democratically held elections (170).

go “two at a time”—should be considered a “joyful minute stolen from . . . slave labor” (10).

With Galvão’s introductory statement and the inclusion of the map prior to the novel’s opening lines, she also makes clear her particular sense of space within the novel; one of her many projects is to develop the novel spatially as much as she experiments with its chronology. The factory district serves as a metaphor for the whole of Brazil, even down to the metonymic relationship between the abbreviated Braz and Brazil proper, and I agree with Hilary Owen’s assessment that Galvão’s “synchronic suppression of chronology” actually compresses “Braz – São Paulo –Brazil – the world into a timeless, utopian potentiality for world revolution” (81). For all the novel’s systematic synecdoche regarding the slum and the factory—her consistently substituting parts like the smokestack or the street for the whole of the area—Galvão makes it clear that although her novel is first and foremost about the factory district, Braz also has the potential to represent a broader worldwide phenomenon. Much as the slum constitutes the whole of the narrative space in Azevedo’s novel but becomes a metaphor for the city-wide and national development of Brazil in the 1880’s, Braz constitutes the finite borders of *Industrial Park* and simultaneously acts as a metaphor for worldwide labor repression. When the state incarcerates Rosinha Lituana for violent revolutionary activity, deciding to expel her because she is “a foreigner” despite the insistence that she “had always given her labors to Brazil’s rich,” she aches at the thought of leaving Braz (Galvão 87). Galvão writes,

But to leave Braz? To go where? That hurts her like a tremendous

injustice. What does it matter! If in all the countries of the threatened capitalist world, there's a Braz. . .

Other men will remain. Other women will remain.

Braz of Brazil. Braz of the whole world. (88)

Rosinha has no other way of accepting forced exile but to view it in terms of finding herself a new Braz, a space similar to the one she will no longer be able to access, but for her, the labor conditions and gender exploitation of Braz are no different from those of anywhere else because “poor people have no country” and men exploit women around the planet (87). To reinforce the fact that Braz constitutes the only true social and gendered space of the novel, Galvão never mentions Rosinha again after the state deports her, and the influence she did wield as a proselytizing, militant Marxist evaporates in her absence.

In two other narrative threads, the diametrically opposed fortunes of Eleonora and Corina foreground the continued problematic histories of race and directly address racial discrimination inside and outside the slum. Corina is an attractive mulatta who works in the mill and dreams of marrying a rich man to take her away from Braz. Her lover, Arnaldo, tempts her with his car and the money he wields. Galvão describes his seduction of Corina as a simple one:

Arnaldo's garçonnière opens its desired secret for her. One more on the Turkish divan.

Also so many delicacies! So many luscious treats for a stomach that burns from hunger. An open bottle. It's so simple. An inexperienced

head on the pillows, drowsy. Sexual mouths suck. Legs incite.

Sudden tears and toilette. Contrition, fear, caresses. (18)

In accepting food she would otherwise never have access to or eat in the slums, where meals for the poor consist of “beans, bananas, and cornbread every day,” Corina unwittingly falls into another trap set by the bourgeoisie—her empty stomach a symbol for the poverty-stricken conditions in which she lives as well as that which literally growls and gnaws at her—and she essentially prostitutes herself for the first time by trading sexual attention for expensive alcohol and sweets (25). At the union meeting in the chapter “In a Sector of the Class Struggle,” one voice in the crowd says as much, yelling “Our daily sweat becomes the champagne they throw out!”—throw out, that is, or, in this case, lavish on the poor for sexual favors. After she becomes pregnant with his child, he leaves her standing in the rain with a “hundred bucks,” which she immediately loses, and when the Madame seamstress at her factory finds out about her pregnancy, she fires Corina with equal disdain, telling her, “In my atelier, there are young ladies. I can’t put whores in with them” (45, 43). She then takes up prostitution in earnest, a profession Galvão describes in its crudest detail, and soon becomes infected from one or more of her clients, and “eventually vomit[s] something suddenly alive, red. . . . a monster. Without skin” in an indigent hospital, giving birth to a diseased baby boy that she soon kills (57). After her imprisonment for infanticide, she sinks deeper into depravity and literally begins to turn tricks for food, settling on the ugly waiter Paco for business, who “roots like a pig” in her “sterile breasts” in exchange for bread, salami and *pinga* (a cheap, strong alcohol made from cane sugar) (112).

Eleonora, on the other hand, experiences all the luxury that life in São Paulo affords. Educated at the Braz Normal School (which Galvão attended), she has designs to be married on her graduation day, although she displays certain bisexual predilections even while in school. She is as beautiful as Corina—"Breasts pointing. A real looker! Very blonde hair. Very straight"—but notice that Galvão describes Eleonora's beauty as a counterpoint to that of the mulatta's: straight (not frizzy) blonde hair and an emphasis on breasts, not legs, and, as the final index of wealth, "filled teeth," as opposed to Corina's "cavities mouth" (28, 32, 9). Her marriage to Alfredo (based on the *modernismo* writer Oswald de Andrade, Galvão's husband for a time) gives her immediate cultural and economic capital, both of which she lacked while living in Braz; she becomes "Madame Alfredo Rocha," and "With him she passes through the golden doors of the grand bourgeoisie" to live "in the isolated citadel of Brazilian high feudalism" (32).⁴² Eleonora immediately fits in, and Galvão comments pointedly that her insatiable desire to have sex is the true marker of bourgeois behavior—as on the night of her first lesbian encounter with her friend Lolita, when Galvão notes, "A sexual desperation of break-up and ruin is in the air. The bourgeoisie entertains itself" (50). Her appetite becomes increasingly voracious and cosmopolitan, her lusting after both a Hungarian count and a Dutch lady at the same time, and her ultimate desire is "to burst her uterus with pleasure" (70).

⁴² Labor strikes and turmoil in the streets were not enough to jeopardize the success associated with industry; indeed, both industry's general success and labor agitations helped to solidify the place of a new class of industrial elites in São Paulo in the 1910s and 1920s. As Joel Wolfe maintains, "The success of the general strike also affected the consciousness of São Paulo's nascent industrial bourgeoisie. The threat posed by the city's laborers forced factory owners to recognize their common interests as members of a class (or class fraction) and to form their own organization in order to confront the workers in a unified way. . . . This process of elite class formation continued into the 1920s as immigrant industrialists gained access to São Paulo's most exclusive social clubs and their children married into native elite families" (25).

Eventually Eleonora's self-indulgence leads Alfredo to denounce her as "a typical decadent," and he quits her for the communist party and Otavia, but not before giving up "half of his fortune" (99). After Alfredo truly severs Eleonora's feeble ties to the proletarian element in the novel—that is, Alfredo leaving Eleonora for Braz after she left Braz for the bourgeois "citadel"—Galvão never mentions her again, again defining the geographical parameters of the novel by a notable narrative absence. However, the reader knows that because of her European features, Eleonora will never have to experience the degradations that Corina lives through, even if her life is a selfish, decadent one. The most striking element of the oppositional binary Corina/Eleonora is that there seems to be no racial and economic continuum of women unaffiliated with the Party—black and too poor, or white and too rich—and that Galvão offers no middle ground between either pole, both of which appear destructive. The novel thus suggests, perhaps a bit naively, that only the Party can reconcile the historically divisive racial differences and gender biases in Brazil, a reading enabled in part by Otavia's successful involvement with her cadres.

Otavia, whom Galvão modeled after herself, is the only character that successfully navigates the pitfalls of labor, radicalism, and femininity in the novel, and the narrative thread in the novel following her education and indoctrination dominates those of the others. Initially she does not have enough exposure to articulate her politics—Galvão describes her as "Simple as a child"—but she dedicates herself to the cause and eagerly reads as much as she can (16). Rosinha proves to be a natural ally and a mentor because of her revolutionary fervor and her experience as a laborer, and Otavia

quickly absorbs Rosinha's Marxist-feminist lessons. Her nascent political development comes to a head in the chapter entitled "Racial Opiate". When Otavia's first boyfriend Pepe tries to get her to join in Braz's Carnival celebration, she tells him, "You're like a contented bourgeois. Your lack of understanding betrays our class. I'm the one who can't turn away from the struggle to join in Carnival" (39). She intuitively and intellectually understands that Carnival "smothers and deceives the revolt of the exploited" and "the poor," despite the fundamental tradition of inverting social, racial, and economic orders that forms the core of its celebrations (37).⁴³ When he then insists they marry under the official sanction of a Father Meireles, she lashes out, telling him, "Father Meireles will never marry me! I'll belong to the man that my body cries out for. Without the trickery of the church or the justice of the peace" (39). Infuriated and unable to comprehend her newfound dedication to the basic tenets of Marxism, he calls her a whore and leaves her.

The state eventually imprisons Otavia for six months for revolutionary activity, and she leaves prison "almost consumptive"—something Galvão would soon experience a few years after the publication of *Industrial Park*—but her jail time only convinces her that the position she has taken is a just one (89). After her release, she meets Alfredo,

⁴³ Drawing on Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque as well as anthropological and socio-historical work dating from the early 1960s, Mary Russo discusses the implications of spectacle and gender in her essay "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory." In it, she makes note that while the "temporary loss of boundaries" during carnival "tends to redefine social frames" and that the "masks and voices of carnival resist, exaggerate, and destabilize the distinctions and boundaries that mark and maintain high culture," more often than not the carnivalesque reinforces historical modes of domination, often at the expense of the (grotesque) female body (215, 218). While this is a reading supported by Galvão's novel, Russo does posit that the positive, constructive laughter associated with Bakhtin's notion of the carnival may be also interpreted as a liberating one, a "dialogical laughter, the laughter of intertext and multiple identifications. It is the conflictual laughter of social subjects in a classist, racist, ageist, sexist society. . . . Carnival and carnival laughter remain on the horizon with a new social subjectivity" (226).

who forswore “two cows. . . the bourgeoisie and Eleonora” while she was in jail (91). Initially mistrustful of his politics and the motives behind his desire to join the Party, Otavia decides to “talk with him all her free hours to see if she can discover a false position, an opportunistic purpose, a shadow of bossism or opportunism” in his convictions (91). Finding no holes in his “political line,” she befriends him and falls in love with him, fulfilling the vow she made before Pepe by giving herself “to the man chosen by her nature. Purely” (103). But, Galvão’s insistence on accurately capturing the reality behind party politics dooms the affair between Otavia and Alfredo. His incapability of leaving certain comforts behind him at the Esplanda (we first see him reading Marx and smoking an expensive cigar in his “rich apartment of the downtown hotel”), his outspoken criticism of the party line, and his rather individualistic perspective on the class struggle in Brazil merit the disastrous label “Trotskyite” among the Party’s staunchest members (48). Unable to reconcile her personal relationship with her deeper commitment to class struggle, Otavia herself recommends Alfredo’s immediate expulsion from the Party, citing certain “hard facts. Inconsistencies. Individualism. Errors” as the grounds for his ejection (104). Her role in the final violent strike is, however, unclear, and although her political engagement strengthens throughout the course of the novel and increasingly tends toward direct action near the conclusion, Galvão makes no further mention of Otavia past her denunciation of Alfredo, as if the personal erases the political in a woman’s experience.

Despite the close ties between Galvão and her fictional counterpart in *Industrial Park*, and in spite of her denouncing Alfredo as bossist and bourgeois, Otavia seems

hesitant to commit wholeheartedly to the radical political and ideological programme of the Party. Some Brazilian critics accuse both Oswald de Andrade and Galvão of representing the “Festive Left,” or leftists using “communist theories to make fun of society, but never actually participating in the radical social reform implicit in Marxist doctrines” (Marshall 284). However, a more likely explanation of this hesitancy is that the author and the character alike tend towards a non-essentialist position regarding politics, labor, and gender. Wolfe speaks at length of the gender biases within the labor unions and anarcho-communist syndicates in São Paulo at the time, in which labor leaders often deferred to openly misogynistic reforms to protect supposedly helpless female laborers from bosses and foremen alike. This phenomenon is apparent in the scene of a labor meeting in the novel. Although the demands of every worker concern family issues, the most vehement speakers are all male, and only one woman actually talks during the meeting. Furthermore, the image of Rosinha Lituana and Otavia “squeezed into one chair” with other male workers ogling them represents the most telling image of their true place in the Party. In the eyes of their male counterparts, they count as one body, the female, and their value as workers merits only a single seat in the discussion, despite the fact that they work in different textile mills (23). Their absolute silence in a chapter predicated upon the loud denouncements and strident vilification of industrialists only reinforces their subordinate position within the scheme of labor and protest.

The novel does not spare Brazilian “feminism” either, critically denouncing it as a bourgeois institution whose members simply equate sexual promiscuity with liberation.

Galvão openly attacks the bourgeoisie's idols of feminism in the form of the international film actress—especially Greta Garbo—as “a prostitute feeding the imperialist pimp of America to distract the masses” (78). Galvão exposes the utter hollowness of feminist progressivism when Dona Finoca, the “old patroness of new arts,” states “How can I not be a ‘communist’ if I’m not a modern woman?” while hosting an extravagant party (33). But perhaps the most glaring fault of early feminist reform is that it does not take race into consideration at all. When Corina gives birth to her son and is afraid of having her son switched with another newborn, Galvão notes that racial and class issues even affect birthing houses: “She doesn’t understand that the distinction is made in the birthing houses themselves. The little children of the paying class stay close to their mothers. The indigents prepare their children for the future separation demanded by work. The bourgeois children are nurtured from early on, linked by the economic umbilical cord” (56). The umbilical cord also transmits poverty from mother to child. Sexual education in the slums occurs only when children hear or see it, and shame is a luxury only the well-to-do can afford: “Only the rich can have shame because each one has a separate room” (74). Because the novel ends with an image of Corina and her new lover “clinging together, victims of the same unawareness, cast on the same shore of capitalist ventures” and eating “salted popcorn on the same bed,” Galvão clearly sees the communist programme lacking in efficacy and true universality (114). The novelist’s choice not to end with the Otavia, the true reformer, but instead to complete the almost naturalist degradations heaped on Corina by multiple sources reinforces the final chapter’s rather

sympathetic epigraph, a quote from Marx: “Exclusive of vagabonds, criminals, prostitutes, in a word, the ‘dangerous’ classes” (109).

Industrial Park paints, then, a bleak picture of slum life, labor, and social reform; quite simply, São Paulo’s decadent manifestation of feminism has no room for the black and the poor, and its particular brand of communism relies on a rather traditionalist gender division of labor. But it is precisely in this broad social critique—encompassing even the Communist Party with which she was affiliated at the time—that Galvão’s true importance as an international novelist and intellectual becomes clear. Hilary Owen notes that the tension in the novel “between absolute, political principles and shifting class identifications gestures toward the need to posit contingent, non-essential connections between variously subordinated positions” (83). In boldly identifying and attacking multiple sites of hegemonic control and oppression—from the police stations to the hospital, from pseudo-intellectual bourgeois parties to Carnival—Galvão clearly separates herself from other proletarian novelists who take a rather limited or programmatic view of political and economic oppression. Furthermore, her open condemnation of white bourgeois feminism predates the intellectual debates of second- and third-wave feminisms that would occur more than twenty years after her death in 1962. If nothing else, the fact that Galvão successfully bridges the multiple gaps between several features—a truly innovative, modernist narrative technique; a trenchant critique of industrialization and exploitation; a somewhat naïve and apologetic but nevertheless critical view of Brazilian communism; and a radical critique of race and gender in a little over one hundred pages should be more than enough to confirm her position not only as a

figure of importance in Brazilian and inter-American literature but also as a necessary if highly underappreciated figure in twentieth-century modernisms. She was, as it were, truly ahead of her time, so much so that she was virtually neglected from any discussion of important Brazilian literature until the final years of Brazil's military rule in the late 1970s and 1980s. However, through her literary contributions regarding gender, labor, and exploitation, Pagu offers a model of Brazilian modernism that should be considered more heavily in coming to terms with issues of modernity and its peripheries, and we should take note of her groundbreaking if neglected work.

Coda

The “form” hypermarket can thus help us understand what is meant by the end of modernity. The large cities have witnessed the birth, in about a century (1850-1950), of a generation of large, “modern” stores (many carried this name in one way or another), but this fundamental modernization, linked to that of transportation, did not overthrow the urban structure. The cities remained cities, whereas the new cities are *satellized* by the hypermarket or the *shopping center*, serviced by a programmed traffic network, and cease being cities to become metropolitan areas. . . .The hypermarket as *nucleus*. The city, even a modern one, no longer absorbs it. It is the hypermarket that establishes an orbit along which suburbanization moves. It functions as an *implant* for the new aggregates, as the university or even the factory sometimes also does—no longer the nineteenth-century factory nor the decentralized factory, that, without breaking the orbit of the city, is installed in the suburbs, but the montage factory, automated by electronic controls, that is to say corresponding to a totally deterritorialized function and mode of work.

—Jean Baudrillard⁴⁴

Where do we go from here? While this project directly addresses the politics and literary aesthetics of the city and the slum, it also points towards other avenues of inquiry, of which I will consider only a few. In highlighting the similarities and differences—
aesthetic, social, and so on—of two American nations' literatures, I have suggested a new version of comparativism. Bringing Latin American literature more directly to bear on discussions of realism and modernism disrupts and decenters existing discussions of so-called globalized discourse that have tended to be centered in Western Europe or the US, and a number of potential projects arise out of this desire, especially regarding the vanguard movements of Latin America (both Hispanic American and Brazilian *modernismos*) and more canonical or traditional modernist texts.

A small example regards the information in a footnote found in the Galvão chapter. The (short-lived) aesthetic and cultural movement associated with Oswald de

⁴⁴Quoted from 77 of *Simulacra and Simulation* Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

Andrade's "Cannibal Manifesto" (see footnote on page 88) potentially adds an interesting wrinkle to a discussion of global modernism and primitivism, and also provides for more in-depth examinations of the cannibal figure as a symbol of cultural consumption in modernism⁴⁵ and the role cannibalism plays in Brazil's *Cinema Novo* as an act of establishing national identity; one need only reread *Heart of Darkness* to see Marlow's ambivalence regarding real cannibals, nameless "savages" who nevertheless show a remarkably ethical "restraint" in the face of colonial degradation, or to view Nelson Pereira dos Santos's black comedy *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* (1971) to see Brazilian filmmakers rewriting the history of the New World—directly confronting Michel de Montaigne and Rousseau's romanticized noble savages—in their celebration of Tupi cannibalism (Conrad 43). The fact that the cannibal as a historical figure is so heavily referenced in Columbus's exploration and colonization of the New World makes it an interesting (inter-)American figure, one that eventually becomes an important rhetorical character during Europe's period of conquest in Africa in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

But to speak more directly to my project and its aims, I think the fields of urban literature, inter-American literature, and realism/modernism all provide rich material with which to sustain a career. One idea I would like to pursue more vigorously is a comparison between the literary celebrities William Dean Howells, the Cuban poet and writer José Martí, and the Brazilian man of letters Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, all of whom wrote about the same time: Howells was born in 1837 and died in 1920; Martí

⁴⁵ Neil Larsen takes up this issue in his chapter "Modernism as *Cultura Brasileira*: Eating the 'Torn Halves,'" from his work *Modernism and Hegemony: A Materialist Critique of Aesthetic Agencies*, published by University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

was born in 1853 and died during the fight for Cuban Independence in 1895; and Machado de Assis was born in 1839 and died in 1908. Each author was totally invested in the production of new literature—realism, *modernismo*, or an interesting precursor to global modern/postmodern texts, as is the case with Machado de Assis and his novel *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (published serially in 1880, and as a novel in 1881)—and each was also committed to projects that established or examined national identities through their work; Howells and Machado de Assis accomplished this in part with their intellectual contributions to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Brazilian Academy of Letters (which Machado founded), while Martí’s examination of New York City and the US as a journalist and consul provides an integral picture of North American life to the Cubans who read his work on the island. The fact that each man had a particular vision of literature and the nation (as well as his own interesting personal histories—Howells and his many literary friendships and patronages; Machado de Assis as a mulatto novelist without formal education writing before and after Brazilian slavery and during the formative years of the Republic; Martí’s tenuous relationship with Spain and the US and his death during the fight for independence) only makes this long-term project more interesting.

A more traditional, US literature-oriented project—one I briefly considered pursuing for this study—was an examination of the intersection between immigrant literature and works by writers like Crane, Howells, Wharton, and Dos Passos that are centered in Manhattan. The spatial politics regarding Wharton’s Gotham in *The Age of Innocence*—“whose horizon,” like that of its characters, is “bounded by the Battery and

the Central Park”—are reproduced by writers training their sights on the ethnic enclaves like the various streets of Lower East Side; for example, Jacob Riis’s depiction of the others’ lives in Manhattan strangely resonates with the strict division of space and culture in Howells’ and Wharton’s genteel or aristocratic novels (103). To complicate these notions of space, I think it necessary to read novels produced by those actually living in ethnic quarters to examine their individual and collective senses of space; novels like Abraham Cahan’s *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896) or later works like Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), Anzia Yezierska’s *Bread Givers* (1925), and Pietro Di Donato’s *Christ in Concrete* (1939) would surely cast a different but nevertheless important light on life in the city. During the course of this particular study I would also want to undertake archival research, in the hopes of finding lost texts that might add to an already rich vocabulary and literature of life in New York—a modest desire, I think.

Finally, my thesis potentially allows me to work with film—an interest that I have maintained since my undergraduate career—and in more cultural studies-oriented projects. I gestured towards the wedding of revolutionary politics, fragmented narratives, and the Soviet Montage of directors like Eisenstein in this study, but I think those links can be strengthened when considering more peripheral novels like *Industrial Park*. Furthermore, the vibrancy of Brazilian cinema now needs further exploration. Brazil has always had a dynamic cinema industry, particularly in terms of the rebirth of Brazilian cinema with *Cinema Novo* in the 1960s and 70s; and recent films by important directors like Walter Salles (*Central Station*, *Behind the Sun*), Fernando Meirelles (*City of God*),

Hector Babenco (*Carandiru*), Jose Padilha (*Bus 174*), and Eduardo Coutinho (*The Scavengers*) indicate that there is a new boom afoot, one willing to address the difficulties of slum life, crime, political corruption, and police brutality in contemporary Brazil. Important Brazilian films now and the inner-city cinema from Los Angeles and New York in the early 1990s contain a number of striking yet underappreciated parallels, parallels I would like to examine. Regarding potential cultural studies projects, I find the growing racial, political, and aesthetic exchanges between US and Brazilian graffiti artists another important topic for discussion. The as-yet-unexplored influences of US hip-hop and graffiti culture starting in the late 1970s—both of which became overnight global exports upon the release of films like director Charlie Ahearn’s *Wild Style* (1982) or the influential PBS documentary *Style Wars* (1983)—and the global interaction between inner-city US rappers and hip-hop artists from the favelas in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo provides a new and interesting topic of research, especially with the growing recognition of Brazilian graffiti and hip-hop. Artists like Os Gêmeos (“The Twins”) and Nunca (“Never”) have contributed legal and illegal works across the globe, but their most important work still deals with the inequality and racial divisions of life in the favelas in São Paulo—as is the case with Os Gêmeos—or the divisive and often confused heritage of indigenous peoples and globalization, featured in the Tupi murals of Nunca.

These widely varying topics surely speak to the breadth and volume of scholarship currently available to those willing to pursue it, and I can definitively state that I will be working at the heart of new, dynamic, and important fields in the future. I feel that the ideas addressed in this study will be ones that I address continually

throughout my future career, and, as such, that the work in this study is far from complete. In any event, I foresee the future work associated with this project as important not only on a personal and academic level but also one committed to issues of social and national justice, for, as Mike Davis demonstrates over and over again, the issues of class discrimination, labor exploitation, police brutality, peripheralization, and the problems associated with deindustrialization and overurbanization are neither new nor likely to disappear. In a time of contentious border disputes, immigration reform, and criticism regarding US economic and foreign policy in this hemisphere, the more we openly examine our relationship with Latin America—even in the context of translated literature, studies of marginalized art in graffiti and hip-hop, or the standards of the US canon—the more we will contribute to meaningful dialogue inside and outside the academy, which I feel is the guiding principle behind higher education and the important work the university does as its social contribution to a better world for all.

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